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**CONFESSIONS OF A
DEALER**

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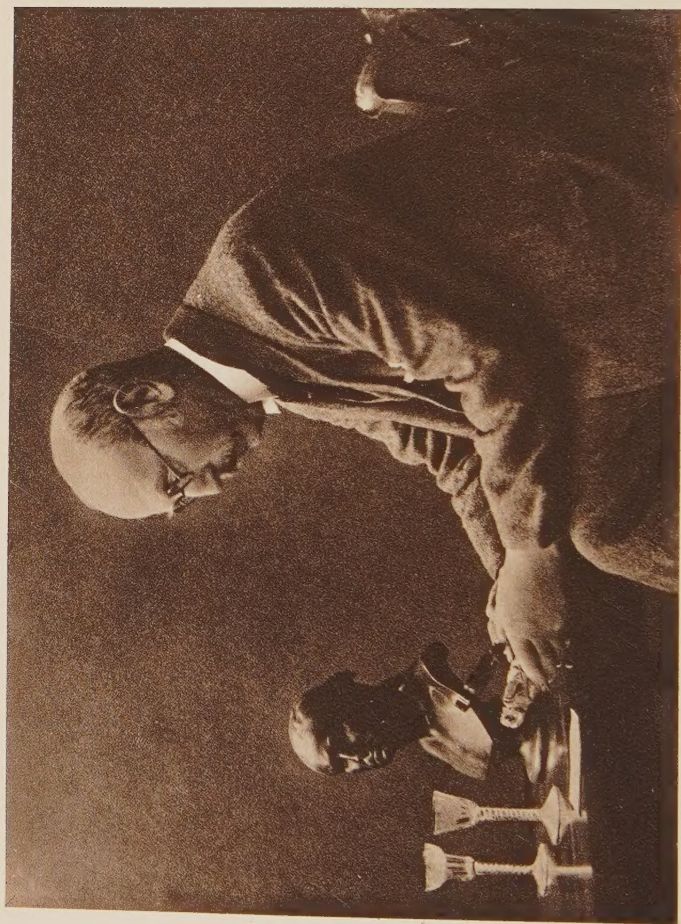
W. & M^{rs} Edward J Thomson

With The Author's warm regards.

Y
Thomas R. Chan

Bourne mouth

Oct 24th 1924



S. Barns. Photo

THOMAS ROHAN

Bourmencuth

CONFESSIONS OF A DEALER

By
THOMAS ROHAN

WITH THIRTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO THE MEMORY
OF ALL THOSE WHO HAVE LOVED
THE GOOD, THE TRUE,
AND THE BEAUTIFUL

Confessions of a Dealer

CHAPTER I

HOW I BEGAN

As there is something strange in the manner of my coming, first to love beautiful things, and then to deal in them, I will begin this narrative of my confessions with a slight biographical reminiscence.

My father was an Irishman of foreign and aristocratic descent who came to England in his youth, and, through the influence of a powerful friend, was given a post in Her Majesty's Customs. He was a tall man, with wonderful blue eyes, and a superlative golden beard of which he was as conscious as he was careful. He was a dandy in the matter of clothes, and a spendthrift in the matter of hospitality. The circle of his friends seemed to widen with every day of his existence, but always to keep its character. He was famous among these intimates as an unerring judge of wine, and a judge whose opinion was always worth having in the matter of cigars. Whether he went in for racing I cannot remember, but his friends were of a roystering and devil-may-care

character, and he seemed to live, without a misgiving of any kind, entirely for his own personal pleasure.

My dear mother, of whom I can never speak without the greatest tenderness, seems to have had a premonition both of her early death and of the fate which was to befall me after her departure from this world. For when I was quite an infant she took me one day in her arms to a church in Gravesend, and there, still holding me in her tender arms, prayed to the Virgin Mary that she would have me ever in her care, protecting me from the sorrows and temptations of the world when my mother was not there to watch over me. Why she went to Gravesend for this purpose I have never been able to ascertain; but she did die very soon after that visit, as she expected, and, strange as it may seem, again and again I have been saved from great tribulation in a manner which seems to me hard to explain by natural causes, and very often on occasions which have had a relation to the festivals prescribed by the Church for the honour of Our Lady.

I have no wish to harrow up my readers' feelings by any prolonged account of my terrible sufferings in boyhood. But it is necessary to my narrative to relate that I was entirely neglected by my father, most cruelly treated by those in his house, and that, before I had derived the smallest benefit from education, I was flung out into the

world to earn my living in a manner which was calculated to destroy all the spiritual longings of my nature.

May I for a moment interrupt this narrative to suggest that all those who have power and influence in the world should never neglect an opportunity to bring home to men and women the tremendous responsibility of parentage? A child's heart is such a wonderful thing; it can be so easily hurt, and also so easily damaged; it is a thing of marvel to the man of science, and it should be a most sacred thing to those who have it in their care. One day mankind will realise that the training of children is the most important work of politics and religion; but until that day comes, men and women should be told over and over again, for the majority are so dreadfully thoughtless and unimaginative, that it is a most awful responsibility to have the heart of a child in their care.

My father told me one day that I was to become an engineer, that a friend of his had got me a splendid place in some engineering works in London where I should soon learn to become a master of the craft. How different the reality! In those dreadful works, which were under railway arches and lighted by artificial light all the livelong day, I had to wait upon very coarse and brutal men who, among other similar tyrannies, would send me to the public-house to fetch their beer.

I hated anything to do with machines. My whole nature was outraged by the talk of the bullying men on whom I had to wait. I was half starved, and very nearly broken-hearted. I stood it for many months ; every day an agony of the soul. Oh, the vileness of the talk all about me ! Oh, the brutality of those dark minds that tried to make a beast of me ! At last I could bear it no longer. I ran away, and, for some time, wandered about the streets of London like a homeless dog.

One day I happened to notice in the windows of a hosier's shop in Fenchurch Street a notice to the effect that a porter was wanted. I summoned up my courage, entered, and offered my services. The proprietor of the shop was amazed, but something in my appearance must have touched his heart, for he said that although he wanted a man, and not a child, he would at any rate give me a trial. Among my duties at this place was the cleaning of the shop window. One of my father's roystering friends must some day have seen me at this work, and reported the matter to my father. As if I had brought disgrace on him, my father descended upon me in great indignation, hauled me off to his home, and handed me over to the most untender mercies of those about him.

Some time after this adventure, he announced to me one day that he intended to make a stock-broker of me, and that through one of his friends



Jacobite Glass and reverse side with motto

he had been fortunate enough to find me a place as a clerk in a first-rate stockbrokers' office. At this period in my life I had discovered that my happiness lay in looking at beautiful things. I spent many hours every day gazing into the windows of old curiosity shops, and sometimes, when I had a few shillings in my pocket, I would venture inside and ask the price of some of the things I had admired from the pavement. It will always remain a mystery to me how I was able to detect in those days a genuine antique from a spurious one, or how I came by an infallible instinct in the matter of glass.

My father had retired from the Customs and set up as a wine merchant in the City of London, and I used to hear him talking to his friends about the various glasses out of which certain wines should be drunk; moreover he possessed two or three 18th century glasses that had belonged to his ancestors in Ireland; but I do not think he had any great knowledge of glass, and I am quite certain he never taught me to feel any interest in the matter. But those few old glasses of his had a strong attraction for me, and when I was quite a boy I would look at them, handle them, and feel their texture. One day, as I glanced into the window of a marine store dealer in Mill Lane, Deptford, on my way to fish in the Ravensbourne, I saw an old drinking-glass among the strange hotch-potch of things on the

shelves behind the dusty windows. I knew at once that it was a desirable thing, and so great was my keenness to possess it, that, nervous as I was, I ventured inside. A rough old man, fierce of aspect, and dirty in his appearance, approached me in his shirt-sleeves. He demanded to know what the devil I wanted. The fishing-rod shook in my hands as I replied that I wanted to know the price of that glass in the window. "What the hell do you want a glass for?" he demanded. I stammered out that I wanted it for my father. He looked me up and down, and made answer: "The price of that glass is a bob, but, because you've got such a damned cheek, you shall have it for a tanner." I paid over the sixpence, and went off to fish with an old English drinking-glass in my pocket—the first item, and a very good one, in my collection.

How did I come by this instinct? Was there guidance of some supernormal character in my passion for beautiful things? I was not only a child, but I was a neglected and a very ignorant child; all my education lay ahead of me; knowledge of any kind was to me a *terra incognita*. I look back to those days with a shudder, but with a certain measure of awe; I cannot prevent myself from thinking that some influence, of which I had no consciousness at the time, was leading me from a darkness that could be felt to a light that can never die.

The stockbrokers' office was better than the hosier's shop, and far better than the dreadful engineering works ; but it was hateful to me from the first, and it became infinitely more hateful to me when I discovered that it was one of the worst bucket-shops in the City of London. My father must have known its character, but he thought nothing of putting his son into such a place of infamy. He told me that if I used my brain I might easily make a lot of money, and he so dinned into my mind this idea of money-making, that for some years I succumbed to it. I made myself an efficient clerk. I had a manner which my employers found useful when clients called upon them. I must have persuaded many scores of people (thank God, innocently) to invest money in bogus concerns. Fortunately this bucket-shop collapsed before I had lost my soul, and fortunately I had made so decent a name for myself that I was taken into the office of a respectable stockbroker.

But I hated the whole thing. My only happiness lay in escaping to the river, or getting far into the country for a walk. I had my hobby, collecting beautiful things, but my only freedom came when I shook the whole city off my shoulders and found myself in the peace and serenity of Nature. I think few men in those days had so intimate a knowledge of the Thames from London to Oxford.

A decisive turn came in my career when I fell in love. To make a home was now a master passion. As it turned out, this passion was soon to lead into a way of life which I could follow with all my heart. I wanted the woman I loved to be surrounded by only beautiful things, and I ransacked all the smaller curiosity shops of London and its suburbs in order to find what I wanted. Among the places I discovered during those years was a furniture repository on the south of the Thames. I used to haunt it in order to collect little bits. One day I discovered there a most glorious Sheraton inlaid mahogany chest of drawers, with the original rose handles. The price was twenty-five shillings. It was knocked about, but I found an aged man in Battersea who could restore it for me, a cabinet-maker who loved beautiful old things, and as long as I live I shall never forget that old man's beaming smile and his satisfied chuckle when he saw my joy at seeing the old chest brought back to its pristine beauty.

At this time I began to read hard, and surrendered myself to the ardours of a collector. Every book I read on the subject of antiques came to me as something I already knew about, and I never experienced the smallest difficulty in perfecting my knowledge of periods, styles, nature of materials, and the names and activities of particular craftsmen. From the very first,

everything in this matter came quite easily and naturally to me, as if the great authorities were merely reminding me of something I knew very well but had forgotten for the moment.

How happy I was, in spite of the Stock Exchange, as I gradually got together the graceful and lovable things which were to fill my first little home. How happy I was, too, when the girl who had given me her love and her confidence became my wife, and we settled down in that little home to begin our married life—a life of the deepest happiness and the darkest sorrows, but a life in which everything was shared, and love was always in command.

The Stock Exchange became more and more hateful to me. I saw it as a temple in which Mammon was openly and shamelessly worshipped, and in which every man was striving to enrich himself at the cost of another. For every man who was gay and cheerful with success, I saw five and six who were screwed up to a state of acute misery by fear of failure. What a fight it was, day after day, the fight of Bull and Bear. The skinning and killing that went on day after day. The eternal see-saw—up and down, up and down—no peace, no security, no steadfast happiness.

I went through the Kaffir boom in 1895. It got on my nerves. I saw clerks converted suddenly into "millionaires"; everyone was making money; everyone was happy; the see-saw was

up and fixed in the sky ; it could never come down. The idea flashed into my mind : " Make a fortune, and escape—the means to an end—gamble, gamble, gamble." I withstood the temptation. Down came the see-saw with a crash. I saw my friends falling about me like ninepins. It got on my nerves. I told my dear wife I could stand it no longer. She said, " Let us take a long holiday, and think things over."

We went to Surrey. I got better in health, and during one of my rambles came across a very remarkable man who was a dealer, and whose strange story I shall tell later on. This man, because he saw that I had a genuine love of the beautiful, let me into some of the secrets of his trade. I became fascinated. I spent days with him. I helped him in his business. I could have been perfectly happy in such a life. But duty seemed obviously to point in a quite different direction, and back again I went to the eternal see-saw of the London Stock Exchange.

Something, however, had changed in me. My instinctive feeling that gambling was morally wrong remained, but a casuistical voice began to challenge my conscience, and I found myself repeating, almost in a mechanical fashion, " the end justifies the means—the end justifies the means." Surrey had been so beautiful. Its calm hills, its deep woods, its leafy lanes, its villages and hamlets full of peace and gentle

contentment, lived in my soul like a presence, and made all the streets about the Stock Exchange seem to me like the environs of some hateful hell. To get away from all this ; to get back to Surrey, or to any other green place where Nature could speak to me of enduring things—this became a passion with me. I decided to gamble. The end justified the means. One big plunge, and I should be free.

The Boer War was nearing its close. With peace, stocks and shares would shoot up sky-high. How easy to make a fortune ! I took all my savings into my hands and exchanged them for mining shares. Only a little while and I should be rich. Wait, wait ! Patience a little longer. The war is at its last gasp. Victory is at hand. Presently there will be such a boom as the world has never seen.

Peace came. Soon afterwards the mining magnates threw all their shares on the market. There was no boom. On the contrary, there was a slump beyond all expectation. My dream, and my savings, vanished into thin air.

The frightful disappointment was like a hammer-blow on my nervous system. "Man," said my doctor, an Irishman who had known my people in Galway, "for God's sake get out of it. Better for you to be a crossing-sweeper in the country than a millionaire in London. If you go on with this life, you'll be dead in six months."

But how to live? I was over forty years of age; three little children looked to me for daily bread; I was responsible for the happiness of my wife. What to do? Heaven knows how that question frightened me, and how often it confronted me in the sleepless watches of the night. What on earth could I do to earn bread? The suffering I endured at that time has helped me, I humbly hope, to feel sympathy with all sick persons, and all men flung out of work. I like to think it has helped me to be an honest man in a trade where opportunities sometimes present themselves of robbing the widow and fatherless children.

The end of it was that we decided, my dear wife and I, to obey the doctor so far as to leave London at once. We agreed that the first thing to be done was to get my health back. If our resources would last until my nerves were restored, we could then sit down and debate what I should do for a living.

I sold up everything I possessed, with the exception of some old china and pottery, which I packed in two boxes for a rainy day. Then off we went to the Isle of Wight. I settled on a little town where there is a wonderful statue in the church composed of the body of a French King, and the head of an English Admiral. There I heard of a cottage of furniture for sale, very cheap. I bought the lot for £10. Then I took

a tiny cottage and furnished it with this cheap furniture. My bank balance now stood at £6.

So desperate were our fortunes that I determined to act at once. I went to the William Whiteley of the town. He sold everything, including articles which were rather questionably described as "antiques." I made a proposition to this shopkeeper. I said that if he would put my bits of old china and pottery in his window, I would describe them and price them, and he should take 20 per cent. of the profits. He seemed a little doubtful of the matter, and perhaps the prices I put upon my beautiful old china rather frightened him ; but eventually he agreed, and off I went to fish for bass off the pier, watching the great liners go by, and wondering how soon, if ever, my china and pottery would find buyers.

Days passed slowly, anxiously, but on the whole beautifully—for the sun shone, the very air was a blessing, and my children rejoiced in all the sights and sounds of a sea-coast town. We were happy, and we could just keep our heads above water, for my old china, bit by bit, found buyers who knew the real thing when they saw it and could afford to pay a London price for it. But, the future !

One day it came to me that I should turn dealer. It was as if a spirit outside me had been pressing me all along to see the wisdom of such a step. I loved old things. I had an

instinctive sense of what was right and true. I should never make a mistake in buying. If I dealt faithfully with those who came to me, I might gradually build up a circle of friends who would trust me. What a lovely life!—seeking the beautiful, finding every now and then something beyond price, and passing these things on to those who loved the true and the right. Yes, but even my optimism quailed a little at the question, how to begin?

Then something happened which seems to me even now like one of those interventions from outside our visible world which we used to call miracles. I went across the water to Southampton, which was then a flourishing town, and called upon an auctioneer. I told him I wanted to find a little shop where I could begin business as a dealer in antiques. He questioned me for some little time, and then proposed that I should go to his home with him. I was surprised by this invitation. He said to me, “I am fond of old things. I have picked up a few. I should like you to see them.” What a piece of fortune. This auctioneer was a genuine collector.

I went to his home. In a few minutes we were going from one thing to another, like hounds on the scent. “This is wrong,” I would say. “How do you know?” “Because——” He was satisfied. “This is right.” “How do you know?” “Because——” He learnt something.

The result of that visit was a friendship with a kind, able, and powerful man. He grew as keen as I was about my business.

No place suitable for a dealer's shop could be got, he told me, for several months. In the meantime he could find me a little house in the suburbs where I might live rent free till the following summer. "I will guarantee the rent," he said to me; "and I am not in the least anxious about the matter; you will be a success." What an encouragement it is when someone believes in us!

With a glad heart I returned to the Island, sold the residue of my possessions to the shopkeeper for a lump sum, and then crossed with my family to the mainland, took possession of the little house in the suburbs, and after waiting three months became the tenant of a tiny lock-up shop in the High Street at a rent of ten shillings a week.

Laus Deo ! Laus Deo !

CHAPTER II

AN AMUSING WAY OF RAISING CAPITAL

EVEN a very little shop demands capital. I was faced by the problem how to get money? I had turned shopkeeper, but my pockets were almost empty. How was I to replenish my stock, pay my rent, provide for my family, and satisfy that most relentless of all collectors—the rate collector?

There was a man who owed me £40. He lived in London. I wrote to him, and wrote quite a dozen times, but could get no answer. His treatment of my letters angered me. It made me determined to get my money.

There was an excursion train to London for 5s., and I went up to town by that excursion train with the firm determination of getting my money. I went straight to the man's offices. I must describe these offices for the sake of what follows. There were three outer doors. The first one bore the names of companies in which the man was interested; the middle door was inscribed with the words "Clerks' Office Entrance." The third

door was marked "Private." The Clerk's Office was enclosed in ground glass with a shutter at the end, on which was the word "Enquiries." There was a door to the right and one to the left, and on either side of the shutter was a chair. When I entered this office the shutter was open, and I asked if Mr. T. was in. The clerk said, "What name?" I gave it. He said, "Will you write it on this slip?" handing me a piece of paper. I did so. After waiting five minutes he returned and said, "Mr. T. is not in." I asked when he would be in. The clerk said he did not know and closed the shutter. Something in the way in which he snapped-to that shutter strengthened my determination not to be beaten. Had I not right and justice on my side? Also, had I not spent five shillings on my railway ticket? I promptly sat down on one of the two chairs. Ah, little shop in High Street, Southampton, how determined you made the most nervous of men to stand by his guns. I think perhaps I know how a soldier feels when he sees the colours of his regiment!

After sitting there for ten minutes or so, another man walked in and asked for Mr. T. The same business again with the slip of paper. After waiting, this man was told to go through the door to the left. In a little while I heard voices talking through the door on the right. I quietly tried the handle and found the door

locked. I listened intently, and could hear the voice of the man I wanted. I now knew he was trying to evade me, which made me very angry.

I got up, went outside, and made for the door marked Private. It opened to my hand, and there was my man seated at his table talking to the caller who had gone through the door to the left. He got up in a very blustering manner, and said I had no right to come into his private office. I sat down on one of his luxurious lounge chairs and told him that I did not intend to leave until he could attend to me. That seemed to subdue him. He sat down again, and after finishing his business with the other man asked me what I wanted of him. I said, "The money you owe me and for which I have written dozens of times. Furthermore, I shall not leave this place till I get it." Wonderful is the courage of a poor man! He sat down and wrote a cheque. My blood was up, but my brain was cool. I told him I should be better pleased with cash, and requested him to send one of his clerks to the bank. He became very indignant and demanded to know if I thought he was going to swindle me. I said, as to that I should know better when his clerk returned. His attempt to treat me as one who was in the wrong nettled me. His righteous indignation, which ought to have amused me, made me very cross. But, looking back, what fun it was.

Eventually Mr. T. sent his clerk to the bank, and presently handed me eight £5 notes. O splendid triumph! This happened just before Christmas. I remember that I spent a little of the money buying small presents for my wife and children. I could not spend much in this manner, for the money was all the capital I possessed to start stocking my little shop. When I got home, and Christmas was over, I went about with that precious money buying small bits of old pewter, English blue and white, a grandfather clock, and even a few old books. Thus I had at least something with which to make a show in my first gallery.

On February 16, 1903, I opened the tiny little shop in High Street, Southampton, and in this place started my fortune as a dealer in antiques. £4 to £5 a week were my early takings, but one day a lady came in, and spent all at once £18. I was overjoyed. It was as if I had come into a fortune. My eldest son, a boy in knickerbockers then, had just come in to see if I wanted any messages sent; I bade him run home, and bring his mother and his younger brother and sister down to the shop. Next door was a restaurant. I took the family there to celebrate the £18. I remember we had roast chicken and no end of pastry—rich pastry! We were wonderfully happy.

From this tiny shop I migrated to half a large

shop next door, so that my family could live on the premises. A year later the owner of the other half of the shop gave up, and again I took my courage in both hands and made myself responsible for the whole of the premises. I never looked back until the Great War, when the little boy in knickerbockers, and his younger brother, too, went out to fight for their country, and to leave their father and mother desolate. Ah, evil days !

I will here relate, before explaining how an antique dealer conducts his business, a singular incident which occurred very early in my life of shopkeeping. It was in a nature of a bolt from the blue. Such surprises give zest to the collector, just as an angler, after a barren time, coming suddenly across a swim where the fish are biting freely, feels himself a new man.

Business had been quiet for some weeks and funds were getting low. One evening, quite late, the bell of the door suddenly rang. It was nearly dark outside, and for economy's sake I had not lit up my establishment. A middle-aged woman, shabbily dressed and hard of face, stood at the door. She greeted me swiftly in this way—pulling something out of a rough bag she was carrying—"I am not going to take less than ten shillings for this. Your man, or somebody who said he came from you, offered me six shillings,

and I told him I was going to take it down to the governor and get nothing less than ten shillings for it."

With this she handed me a small pot about four inches high and as shabby as herself. It had a quaint bellied body in ware and was finished with a metal top. I felt sorry for the woman but hesitated about buying the pot, chiefly because I was not in possession just then of many ten shillings. But something seemed to urge me to be generous, and take my chance in buying this little pot offered to me in the twilight by a shabby woman for ten shillings. I gave her the money, and took the little pot into my office at the back of the shop.

I put on the light and noticed that the rim of metal round the pot had a finish of cats' teeth, a finish that was used in early work. This was something. I cleaned the thing up and found that the top and rim, and a little billet on the top of the handle, were silver. I then thoroughly cleaned the ware of the pot, which was extremely dirty, and came to the conclusion that I had got a glorious find—a little Tiger ware pot, probably Elizabethan by the workmanship of the silver. I was immensely excited. I turned to my books, and called to my dear wife, "Come, I've something to show you."

At that time I had very few clients, and as I desired to sell the pot quickly, indeed it was

really then a question of having to sell it quickly, I reluctantly made up my mind to send it to London. So next morning I rang up a good friend of mine in the town, and asked him if he would go to London for me. He said yes. But when he came round to the shop, and I shewed him my little pot, he laughed at me. He said, "Waste of time to take a little mustard pot like that to London." He shook his head, laughed at me, gave me to understand he was no fool. I pulled a sovereign out of my pocket and said to him, "H., you know I have very few of these coins to throw away. Here is your fare, and your lunch on the train. Go to C. Brothers in Bond Street, and ask them £40 for this pot. They won't laugh at you. I promise you that. They will probably try to beat you down; that's natural; but don't take less than £30." I also said, "When you have sold it send me a telegram, as I shall be anxious."

He caught a train that would get him to London somewhere about half-past twelve, and I thought I might hear about two. Two o'clock came, three o'clock; no wire. Four went by, and five. By that time I was in a state of despair. About twenty minutes past five the bell went, and there outside was a telegraph boy. How anxiously I answered that bell! How eagerly I tore open the envelope of the telegram! This is what I read: "Sold pot for thirty-five

pounds.” Imagine my joy. Thirty-five pounds of capital !

My friend did not turn up until seven, and then he told me why I had been obliged to wait so long for his message. When he got to London there was a thick fog, and he had the greatest difficulty in finding his way to Bond Street. When he got to the dealers’ shop, he saw one of the well-known brothers and showed him the pot. After examining it, Mr. C. asked him what he wanted for it. He said fifty pounds. Mr. C. said fifty pounds was too dear. My friend made a movement as if to take the pot back, but Mr. C. said, “ I would like my brother to see it.” My friend waited some time, and then Mr. C. returned saying the best offer he could make was thirty pounds. My friend said that was too little, and if that was Mr. C.’s best offer he thought he had better take the pot back. But Mr. C. was unwilling to let it go. After some talk he made a final offer of £35, which my friend accepted.

I insisted on giving my kind friend five pounds for his trouble, and put the balance of the money to my capital account. Thus the little Elizabethan pot added a few solid bricks to the foundation of my business. I tried to find the woman. I asked one or two of the men who worked for me if they had ever sought to buy a little pot of this description, but they knew

nothing about it, and I could never find the woman. I should have been well pleased to have given her a portion of my profit, and I should have much liked to ask her how she came to possess that little pot.

CHAPTER III

RAPPERS AND THEIR WAYS

How does a dealer come to possess the antiquities with which he illustrates his window and decorates his counter? I am not speaking of the frank charlatan whose stock is replenished every week from the factories of Birmingham, and whose "old" rummers and "old" Staffordshire and "old" wax models of Napoleon and Josephine, arrive by the crate. No, I am speaking of the average honest man whose shop does contain a few really good and interesting antiquities. How does he come by them?

Such a man, if he establish in the place where he lives a name for fair and honest dealing, will have a certain number of beautiful things brought to him, often in secret, by his fellow-townsmen. Always there is someone who is obliged for one reason or another to part with some family treasure. Many times, alas, the treasure has been cherished, with no valid reason, for a generation or more, and sad indeed is the task of the sentimental dealer who has to tell a poor lady that her bit of china or her bit of glass, of which

she so often heard her mother speak with bated breath forty or fifty years ago, and which she herself has kept carefully wrapped up in tissue paper ever since she fell on evil days, is worth only a few shillings. On the other hand, occasionally the hoarded treasure is worth infinitely more than the timorous seller ever imagined in her wildest dreams.

Presently I shall have stories to tell of people who have come to me in their distress with some such carefully guarded treasure, but I propose to begin this chapter with an account of the queer person who makes it his business to keep the dealer supplied with antiquities, and who is known in the trade as a Rapper.

Years ago, you must understand, before there was any considerable curiosity about antiques, and when the body of collectors was a very small one indeed, the dealer was served by a primitive man known as a huckster or higgler. This person was engaged in selling things, and went from village to village with a pony and trap, sometimes with only a basket on his shoulders, seeking his customers among the wives of farmers and field-labourers. Occasionally he would find some old woman who had no money to buy his brand new wares, but who would offer to exchange for his bright tin kettles, or his highly coloured china jug, an old chair, or a pair of vases on the mantel-piece which had belonged to her mother. In this

way, the huckster would become an agent for the dealer in the market town, and now and then one of these hucksters would acquire knowledge about antiques, and come to distinguish between what was good and what was bad, so that in the end he proved a valuable servant of the dealer. He got into people's houses, and in many a poor cottage in those days there was often something of real beauty and great age to be seen on the dresser, the dresser itself very often being a fine piece of furniture.

Thus Aladdin's method descended down the ages, until from the huckster was evolved the Rapper.

He gets his queer name from his courage in rapping on any door that takes his fancy. That is his one introduction. He raps and enters. He must have a plausible manner, he must be entirely free from diffidence and modesty, he must be able to win confidence from the first moment of a conversation. A remarkable person, and one who ought to have figured long ago in works of fiction, for he is typical of English country life and as much a part of our present rural civilisation as Jane Austen's characters were part and parcel of the civilisation that is dead and gone.

In many cases the Rapper still deals in other things, and is still a huckster as well as a Rapper ; but many of them use a huckster's trade only as

a cover for their real job, which is to pick up antiques as cheaply as possible and carry them off to a dealer for a high price. You may still find in parts of England a sort of tinker who uses Shanks's pony to go from village to village, and must walk many miles every week in his search for something rare and valuable. Such men must find no little pleasure, I think, in their gypsy-like life of seeking treasure where no one else supposes it to exist. Some of them are genuine artists in their own way, and their knowledge of the country and of country people is almost unrivalled. But not often is the man who travels with a horse and cart, the cart hung round with mats, brooms, and new crockery, a Rapper of the real kind. Indeed the modern Rapper is a person so entirely different from his earliest progenitor that he almost deserves a new name. He now owns his own motor-car, carries a cheque-book in his pocket, and can pass himself off as a rich man who *happens* to be passing through a village, and who *happens* to have heard that you possess some very good Chelsea, etc., etc. Sometimes he is an honest man ; sometimes he is a most unblushing rogue. " You must have a face of brass," one of them said to me, " and a tongue of silver, to be any good at the game."

Here is a story which illustrates the methods of some modern Rappers. Not long ago a shrewd and unconscionable Rapper caught

sight of a Chippendale table in the window of an old-fashioned house in a country town. It was a nice little table worth twenty or thirty pounds. He rapped, got the name of the owner from the servant, and was admitted to the drawing-room. In a few minutes he had noticed such vases and glasses in the room as were valuable—a few perfect specimens of their kind. The owner appeared. The Rapper, as pleasantly as possible, explained how he had caught sight of the table, and how, being a collector, he had made bold to ask for a closer view of so perfect a specimen of Chippendale's art. The owner's confidence was won *instantly*. He professed agreeable surprise at hearing his little table so praised by a trained mind; he confessed he had never thought the table was worth a lot of money. "This table," said the Rapper, fingering it very lovingly, "is worth a hundred pounds." The owner appeared to think such a figure incredible. "I myself am not a rich man," continued the Rapper, "but I will gladly give you eighty pounds for it." "You will?" "Yes, gladly." "You mean it?" "I do indeed." "Very well, you shall have it."

Then the Rapper turned, but carelessly, to his real business. "Those are rather nice little vases on that china cabinet." "Are they?" "Yes, very nice indeed." "What are they worth?" "Oh, they're not worth very much;

but they're pretty, very pretty indeed ; I should say they are worth four or five guineas ; at any rate I would risk giving that amount for them." And then the same thing with an old English drinking glass, a fine piece of Waterford, and a good bit of pottery.

He takes out his note-case. " I shall have to send you a cheque for the table," he says carelessly, " but I'll pay for the little things now and take them away with me to save packing. You promise, of course, not to part with the table to anyone else ? "

Of course the owner of the table never saw that Rapper again, and never heard a word from him. If he knew the enormous sum which the little bits fetched a week later he would surely have been very angry indeed. As for his table, I expect it is still in his house, but probably removed from the window.

You may have noticed that many a beautiful Chelsea figure has had the head broken off and stuck on again, sometimes so cleverly stuck on that it takes an expert to discover it. People naturally think that the housemaid is responsible for these breakages, and wonder that more figures have not been broken in the course of ages of dusting. But in many instances these broken heads mark the path of the Rapper. He goes into a cottage, picks up a Chelsea figure, offers thirty shillings for it, is refused, twists off

the head with a quick movement of finger and index, and exclaims, "Why, the thing's broken; it's not worth fifteen shillings!" The poor woman will protest she had no idea the figure was broken, or even cracked, and seeing her treasure ruined will gladly part with it for fifteen shillings. A clever Rapper can break off the head of a china figure with extraordinary cleanness. But what a heart he must have to do such a thing and to cheat a poor woman into the bargain.

I have said that the up-to-date Rapper, now that antiques are scarce and valuable, travels the country round in his motor-car and generally carries a cheque-book. The cheque-book has become a valuable asset to him, in this way. If he purchases anything of considerable value, he generally dates his cheque two or three days ahead, which enables him to sell the goods he has bought, and place the money in the bank to meet the cheque he has given to the seller.

Sometimes there is disaster. He, the Rapper, has made a mistake; either he has given too much, as he is often a veritable gambler with an absurd notion of the value of things, or he cannot find a market in time to meet the cheque. In this case, he will take the article back, and make an excuse that he had bought it for some notable person or institution and that his clients in the meantime have already bought that certain

article, and therefore do not now require it. He is a man full of tricks, and clever enough to get out of awkward positions.

A Rapper, using a bicycle to do one of the towns on the Thames, caught sight in a cottage of a Cromwellian clock with the original bracket. He saw the old lady who owned it and offered thirty shillings for it. She said she could not sell it without her Jack's consent ; Jack was her son, she explained, and he was working on one of the bridges over the Thames. The Rapper found the son, but the young man would not sell the clock, and was angry that his mother should have shown it to the Rapper. But was our Rapper done ? Not a bit of it. He went away, tore a leaf out of his pocket-book, wrote on it in pencil : " Let this man have the clock on paying you two pounds," and signed it " Jack." Then he bicycled back to the cottage, and read his forged message to the old woman. She was perfectly satisfied and took the paper, with the Rapper's two pounds, and let him take the clock. In a few minutes he had handed her the two pounds and was off to Reading as hard as his bicycle could take him.

This same Rapper once tried to get a pair of old Buck colour prints from a venerable lady at a village in the Meon Valley ; but she would not sell them. I think a pound was offered for them. He went back to the adjoining town,

found a burly and fairly well-dressed old man drinking in a public-house, and asked him if he would like to earn ten shillings. After explaining what he wanted him to do the old man agreed to the bargain.

Then the Rapper went back to the house, and said he had brought Cecil Rhodes to see the old woman's prints, and to see if he would give any more money for them than the amount already offered. Rhodes examined the prints, and offered three pounds for them. The old lady being very flabbergasted at meeting so great a notability, breathlessly accepted his offer and almost dropped a curtsey when he offered her his hand in farewell.

I bought these prints from the Rapper for £10 the pair, "Mother's Hope" and "Father's Darling" (beautiful impressions), but I never knew how they were obtained till many months after I had sold them. These men are very secretive in their movements, so frightened are they that others will find out their hunting grounds and use their own methods.

One amusing tale of this same Rapper concerns a fine old English marquetry grandfather clock which he discovered at a small house in a town on the Portsmouth Road. He bought the clock at an agreed price from the woman of the house, with a bottle of gin thrown in to clench the bargain. Mr. Rapper then sat down and began

drinking the gin with the woman. They were half-way through the bottle when the woman's husband came in, and speedily showed signs of natural annoyance at finding his wife drinking with a strange man. Mr. Rapper, unfortunately, was always pugnacious at the best of times, but in liquor he was most unpleasantly aggressive. The end was a free fight between the husband and the Rapper, and, alas, the poor clock came in for some of the blows and a good number of bumps as the pugilists raged together. When it was brought to me the door was off and part of the hood was broken. Luckily it was otherwise intact, and I bought it. It was through asking the Rapper to account for its broken condition, which one could see was of recent date, that I learned the story of the bottle of gin and the angry husband—almost a Boccaccio tale.

Another Rapper with whom I came in contact was an individual of grandiose ideas. He drove a high-power motor-car, and only called on the "big houses." His *modus operandi* was to dash up to the front door in this car, and having found out the name of the owner, to ask the servant if Mr. or Mrs. So-and-So were at home, and if either of them was at home to send in his card. Underneath his name on this card was the legend, "Expert and Adviser in Antiques and Collector for Museums." If he gained, by this boldness and swagger, an interview with the

owners of a house he would say he had heard that they had some particular article of value for sale, and that he was looking for this particular article for a certain museum, which would generally be some considerable distance from the neighbourhood he was "rapping" in. The lady and the gentleman might say they had no such thing as he was looking for, but Mr. Rapper would have been using his eyes whilst in the room and would soon be on such terms with the owners that he would go all over their house and pick up many a nice little gem as he went. A more engaging person it would be hard to meet, and he really knew something about antiques. I suppose he had friends all over the country and was regarded by many simple people as a great expert and a true friend.

I will mention two tales I have heard of this worthy which will give some small idea of the boldness of the fraternity in getting what they want.

The Rapper was working Cornwall and Devon with his motor-car. He called at a "big house" and said he was purchasing fine Oriental china for a notable collector—money was no object if he could get the right article. He was shown by the lady of the house a very fine pair of Khang-Shi *famille verte* beakers. After some talk he offered £70 for the pair. The lady said she thought it was very little, but would ask her son, and if

“Mr. Rapper” would call in the afternoon she would give him an answer. He called again to learn that the son would not agree to sell the beakers, saying that he thought the price offered was far too low.

Mr. Rapper went away discomfited, but not beaten. He got on to the telephone to a friend in London, and the next morning he received a telegram which he took post haste to the house where the Oriental beakers were, and, seemingly in a breathless condition, asked for the lady or gentleman. He was ushered in and pompously and excitedly exhibited his wire. It contained these words: “Will give seventy pounds each for *famille verte* beakers—Rothschild.” He said he had got on to the telephone to Lord Rothschild, had given a description of the beakers, and, after thinking the matter over, Lord Rothschild had sent this reply. What a friend of the family! He obtained the beakers, and I understand sold them for some hundreds of pounds.

The next story does not at all reveal this Rapper as a family friend. He had been told by a small dealer in a town of an old admiral living in a house some twelve miles out, who had some fine antiques. He went to the admiral’s house, bought various things from him, but failed to obtain a pair of very early Dresden birds which the admiral knew were valuable and was not at all anxious to part with.

One day Mr. Rapper called again, and said that he had a letter of introduction to Dr. Bodie, the great German antiquary, and could get probably £300 or £400 from him for the Dresden birds. Mr. Rapper had by this time gained the confidence of the old admiral, who let him take the birds away. This, I believe, was about a month or so before the war. The admiral waited for the return of Mr. Rapper from Berlin, but he never came. War was declared; the admiral, after waiting some weeks, wrote to the address given to him by the Rapper. No answer was received.

About 1916 Mr. Rapper called on the old admiral and told him a wonderful story—that he was in Berlin negotiating the sale of the Dresden birds when war was declared. After many days and weeks of fruitless negotiation he got into Belgium with the birds, and for safety's sake buried them. He said he knew exactly the spot where they were buried, and when the war was over he could go out, exhume them, and bring them back. The admiral, I believe, died in 1918, and it was through his executors calling in a licensed valuer that I heard of this story. In my own mind I don't believe the Dresden birds went any farther than London.

Certainly, if the reader has valuables in his house I should advise him not to part with them on any account to a plausible stranger, however

sympathetic and friendly his manner. There are plenty of reputable dealers only too glad to give a fair price for antiques, and there is the alternative of putting these precious things into a sale with a reserve on them.

Here is a rather remarkable incident in my own experience, and although a Rapper figures in it only as an introducer I will tell it in this place, before I clear the decks for a chapter on Rings. This incident happened many years ago, but I remember it as if it were an event of last week.

A Rapper whom I could trust, and who was a fair judge of old furniture, told me one day of a fine bookcase at Wimborne. His description was so inviting that I went with him in search of the thing. He guided me to a small house and there left me. I knocked at the door. After waiting some time a very old and gaunt woman, looking extremely ill, slowly and suspiciously opened to me. She stood there, with the light of day shining into the innumerable lines in her wrinkled skin, staring at me with eyes as bright and glittering as a young girl's. I explained that I had heard she possessed an old bookcase or cabinet. Her answer almost took away my breath. Without any change in her expression, and in a voice which seemed to come from the grave, she said to me, " Young man, I think you need not worry to see my old cabinet, for I am

going to die to-morrow." I recovered myself as best I could and said, "Oh, surely not, you look quite well." This was a piece of nervous politeness on my part. In truth she looked like death. She fixed me with her old steady eyes, and presently made answer, "You had better come in and have a look at it."

She took me into her front room, which was very stuffy and as silent as a tomb, and there in the midst of many common cheap things was a beautiful Chippendale bookcase. It was decorated with extraordinarily fine carvings on the cornice, which depended from it and resembled icicles hanging down from the top to the level of the exquisite tracery of the doors. The cupboard below, on which the bookcase stood, had a beautiful carving round the front and sides, and it was in its old pristine condition, utterly untouched by the French polisher. When I had done admiring this work of art, the old woman said, "Now, young man, what will you give me for my bookcase?" This happened seventeen or eighteen years ago. "Well," I said, "I like it very much, and I will give you a good price—forty-two pounds." "Well," said she, "that is the best offer I have had since the late Lord Alington offered me twenty-eight pounds for it when he was turning me out of our farm. That was after my husband died. His lordship wouldn't let a widow stop on his farms, that was

his rule ; so I made a rule ; I said I wouldn't let him have my bookcase." She nodded her old head with approval of a memory that satisfied her soul. Continuing, she said, "If you like to leave your name and address on a card and put down the price you have offered, I will put it inside the bookcase, and when I die my people can send to you, and sell it to you if they like." I said, "Why don't you sell it now, and enjoy the proceeds of the money?" She looked at me almost sternly. Was she not to die on the morrow?

About five days later I received a letter from a man who wrote from an address at Hordle, stating that if I liked to give £50 for the bookcase I could have it ; he added that he would meet me at Brockenhurst Station on the down platform on the following Tuesday. I wrote in answer to this that I had never offered £50 for any bookcase, but presuming that he was writing of the one I had seen a few days ago at Wimborne I would meet him as agreed and discuss the matter. I described myself as wearing glasses and being tall, etc., so that he should be able to identify me.

I went to Brockenhurst Station as agreed, and as I alighted a short, stocky, rubicund man came up to me, looking what he was—a cattle dealer, and greeted me almost effusively. I said, "I suppose you have some interest in the bookcase at Wimborne?" He said well, yes, in a way, as

his wife was the old woman's daughter. I told him I had made a very good offer, and that by the owner's own words my price was £14 more than the late Lord Alington had offered. He said, "That be quite right, but it is a fine upstanding bit of old stuff, and them bits ain't found every day. Ah, I know they aren't!" And so it went on, a regular wrangle with a cattle-dealer trying to get a few pounds more for an article of whose value he was ignorant and for whose beauty he had no feeling. This went on for nearly half an hour. He came down to forty-seven pounds ten shillings, but I would not budge. When I saw the train coming in for my return journey to Southampton, I said, "Well, my friend, we cannot come to a deal." But just as the train was going, and as I really wanted to possess the piece, I said out of the window, "I will make it £45." "Give us your hand on it, sir," said he, striding after the train; and I called out to him that I would bring the money over to Wimborne on the following Tuesday.

The old woman was quite prepared for me when I arrived with the money in notes and gold. The son-in-law was there. I had ordered a van to be at the house, and it was there waiting for me. I paid the old woman her money, and she counted it carefully three times; then from a drawer in the bookcase she took a woman's stocking and put the money into it, tied it with a knot, and

laid it on the table. She then turned to her son-in-law, and said, "Jim, here's a shilling, go and get some beer for yourself. I suppose you would like this money to go to market with and buy some heifers, but you ain't going to have it. I got something else to do with it." She then turned to me and said, "Young man, wait here," and began bundling her son-in-law out of the room. I heard the front door shut, and after waiting about five minutes I heard the old woman (she must have been getting on for eighty) coming slowly down the stairs. She entered the room, breathing hard, and carrying, to my surprise, a beautiful walnut stool, of a lovely golden colour, and, better still, covered with the old needlework of its period, Queen Anne. She said to me, "Young man, I feel I have taken too much money from you for my old bookcase, so I thought you would like this old relic to make up for it. Some years ago at the farmhouse, a person offered me £10 for it, so it's good, and I want you to have it for a makeweight." She said that if I left it behind nobody would care for it, and added, "It was given to me by my mistress, who I was lady's maid to, and she used to sit on it to have her lovely hair dressed." She regarded the stool with affection. I told her I should be glad to give her something extra for it, since I loved it as much as the bookcase; but, "No," she said; "take it away, and get out

quick before Jim gets back, else he will want to have a say in the matter."

A strange memory, an incident that reveals something of the history of the last century. I often think of the old gaunt woman as a bright young girl brushing the lovely hair of her mistress, and then going off to be a farmer's wife with that bit of beautiful domestic furniture under her arm. I have a feeling that her children disappointed her, and that her old age was lonely and sad, an old age feeding on memories, and memories not all of which were happy. I think she bore her grudge against Lord Alington to the grave.

CHAPTER IV

A FEW PICKINGS FROM THE KITTY

I WILL now tell the reader a story that fitly follows the tale of the Rapper and his ways. It is the story of the Ring, or the Knock-Out, and carries us a step further into the mysteries of dealing in antiques.

Many people know that dealers form themselves into a Ring, in order to buy cheaply at an auction ; but I have been surprised to find how few people are aware of the procedure in this matter. Perhaps the reader will welcome a simple exposition before I proceed to incidents and anecdotes.

Suppose ten dealers have formed themselves into a Ring, that is to say, into a conspiracy to cheat owners of property out of the true value of their possessions ; and suppose that these ten conspirators attend a sale in a country house and there find a picture which is worth a fortune. The usual procedure is as follows : A meeting is held before the sale, and the matter is debated. How much is the picture likely to fetch in this auction ? Let us

say that it is agreed the price will be round about £100. It is then settled that one of the dealers who wants the picture shall bid for it, and he is styled the King of the Knock-Out.

The picture is put up, Lot 21, let us say, and the nervous bidders glance at the formidable dealers from London to try to discover what they think about it. Those professional faces express indifference, contempt, or active dislike. At last someone bids £50. The King of the Knock-Out, as if he is willing to risk a few pounds on a doubtful picture, makes an advance of £5. The bids proceed, the rest of the dealers laughing or jeering among themselves, and at last the valuable picture is knocked down to the King for, let us say, £100.

What follows? That evening the ten men assemble in a private room, and the picture is put up for sale among themselves by the King of the Knock-Out. Let us suppose that it is bought by one of them for £1,000. As soon as the sale is completed he takes his wallet from his pocket and counts out bank-notes to the tune of £1,000, and places these notes in the bowl or kitty which occupies the centre of the table. The first man to help himself from the kitty is the dealer who bid £100 at the sale. He takes from it the sum he has already paid to the auctioneer, viz. £100. This leaves £900 in the kitty. Ten into 900 goes ninety times; therefore each man takes £90 out

of the kitty, including the man who has paid in the original thousand pounds, and the matter is ended.

But not always. Suppose that two other dealers think that they can find a rich man to pay a big price for this picture. It is within their rights, as members of the Ring, to challenge a second Knock-Out among themselves. Seven of the men have gone home contented with their spoils of £90 each ; but these three remain for a second Knock-Out. Once more Lot 21 is put up for auction, and the three big men bid against each other. Let us say that one of them runs it up to £3,000. He places this sum in the kitty. The man to whom it was knocked down for £1,000 takes that sum out of the kitty, and the remaining £2,000 is divided between the three conspirators. In rough figures the picture has cost its possessor a little more than two thousand guineas, for from his outlay of £3,000 must be deducted first his tenth share of the original bidding (£90) and, second, his third share of the second Knock-Out, say £667.

Let us suppose that he finds a rich man who gives three thousand guineas for this picture. The dealer's profit is, then, something more than £900, or over nine times the price paid to the unfortunate owner.

I hope I have made the procedure of the Knock-Out quite plain, and that the reader who may

one day put some of his property up to auction, will be wise enough, in consequence of this knowledge, to employ an expert to place a just value on his possessions. It is the ignorance of the public which provides the Ring with its main opportunity for fleecing owners of their just rights.

One aspect of this matter is worth the attention of His Majesty's Commissioners of Inland Revenue. The members of a Ring do not keep books and do not pay by cheque. Their conspiracy of silence at the sale extends to their offices and shops. No one ever learns what they make as members of the Ring, and one knows enough of them to aver with confidence that they never pay one single sixpence of Income Tax on their nefarious profits.

There are men in this country, the reader may be surprised to learn, who make £600 a year and upwards by merely following sales as members of a Ring without purchasing even a single lot. Some of them, I can safely say, would hardly know what to do with the chair, or the print, or the silver, or the mirror, for which they have boldly offered bids as members of a Ring. Many of these men know that they are despised by the big dealers in their Ring, but they are content to keep their mouths shut and to pocket their share of the plunder. Other dealers, not members of a Ring, will attend a sale solely with the object of being

bribed not to bid by the big men. I remember once hearing one of these big men openly say to his companion at a sale, "All those men over there are mud, and a few shillings among the lot will brush the whole d——d crowd away."

Some few years ago I heard that a beautiful Hepplewhite bookcase was included in the furniture of a certain country house, otherwise very poor, and that the ring from London, Bath, and Bristol were counting on buying it for a mere song, if a certain adjectived man, myself, did not turn up at the sale. I did turn up at that sale, and before entering the house I learned from one of the hangers-on of the conspiracy, who accepted from me a tip of five shillings, a very important piece of information.

It seems that the dealers were so convinced of buying the bookcase for £80 or £90 that they held their Knock-Out the evening before the actual sale. This queer meeting of the conspirators took place in the shop of an antique-dealer who lived not very far away from the scene of action, and in that dusty little shop the bookcase, marked as being bought for £90, was knocked down to a Bath dealer for £200. So certain were the conspirators that things would go as they anticipated, that some of them, not even bothering to wait for the sale next day, went home then and there thoroughly satisfied with their day's business.

I looked at the bookcase, liked it, and came

to the conclusion that it was worth £250 or £260. I decided to have some fun with the dealer from Bath. What his feelings must have been when he saw me at the sale I do not know, but he took no pains to hide those feelings from me when the bookcase came up for auction.

No one made any offer for a few moments, and then the Bath dealer snapped out, "Thirty pounds." As blandly as possible I said, "One hundred." He affected to ignore this sudden jump, and bid an extra ten pounds. I looked at him, saw the rage in his face, and said quite sweetly, "One hundred and fifty." This was too much for him. "Two hundred!" he shouted, and glared at me as if to say, "There, I dare you to bid a farthing more." I turned to the auctioneer and said, "Guineas." Silence followed. I looked round for the man from Bath. His place was vacant. A wonderful peace took possession of my heart, the peace of a deep and rich satisfaction. The hammer fell. The bookcase was mine for two hundred guineas, and the Bath man had gone home with no bookcase and minus £200, save his share of the previous Knock-Out. Before leaving the room I had sold that bookcase to a client for £250.

In the big furniture sales at Christie's there are now few, if any, activities of the Ring, but in London sales of pictures the Ring is busy and the Knock-Out still rules. Where the conspirators

make their money is at country sales, and I am sure that there has been no considerable sale of country-house furniture for many years in which prices have not been deliberately depressed by these highwaymen of civilisation.

Apart from their callous indifference to the crime of robbing a seller of a part of his just wealth, these men, whom I call the vampires and ghouls of beauty, always inspire me with a particular contempt, perhaps I may also say a vigorous disgust, because they have no feeling at all for lovely things and no admiration whatsoever for noble or delicate craftsmanship. Many of them have knowledge, some of them even great and enviable knowledge, but commercialism rules their base hearts, and if more money was to be got out of Wardour Street than out of Sheraton and Chippendale they would be there with all the enthusiasm of a virtuoso ; for where the carcase is there will the vultures be gathered together.

Let me philosophise a little.

In my experience of forty years' collecting and dealing in antiques, I find that the coveting of old things has a strange and rather alarming effect on the psychology of human nature. One's conscience becomes, putting it mildly, very elastic, and whereas, in the usual way, outside the pale of antiques, one would be very punctilious, the moment something antique crops up all sorts of subterfuges are used and justified

to obtain the coveted article at a rubbish price, and the most moral people in the world will hug themselves at the thought of having obtained, no matter how, a bargain.

Take for example the professional men in a country town or village ; I mean those who have the cure of the soul and the body. I remember some years back hearing that the parson of a certain village had bought from the village postman a seventeenth-century bronze mortar for half-a-crown. I was at that time making a collection of these early mortars for a client of mine, the late Lord Swaythling, so I called on this reverend gentleman and explained the object of my visit. He was a hard nut to crack. After considerable bargaining I bought it, but I had to give thirty times more than he gave for it. I did not mind, as this mortar had the head of Charles I. cast on it in relief four times. But I could not help wondering whether any of the clerical gentleman's profit would find its way into the purse of the postman.

His Reverence said he would like to show me a pair of chairs that he had purchased from an old parishioner for £2 the pair. These two chairs were Hepplewhite, and very finely carved arm-chairs, two of the finest chairs I ever had the happy fortune to see and to handle ; beautifully carved, most delicate lines, and with the original patina in an untouched state—that supreme

desideratum of the true collector. I offered as many pounds as he gave shillings for the chairs. He retorted : " If I want to sell I shall probably get £60 for the pair at Christie's." The most charitable construction one could place on a case like this is that His Reverence, in purchasing these chairs for his own use and benefit, considered he was quite justified in buying them at a rubbish price, so long as he did not realise or sell them for a profit. His parishioner, he would argue, had no knowledge of their value, and was perfectly satisfied with the sum received. But there is another aspect of this matter, if we think about it, only a little way below the surface.

I once had an instructive adventure with a doctor in a country town. He wrote to me saying that he had a few antiques he desired to sell, and inviting me to pay him a visit. I went, and after looking at the various things he desired to get rid of, I purchased one or two of them. On going through his house I saw in the hall a small walnut long-cased clock by Tompion ; anyone who has any knowledge of clocks and clockmakers will know, of course, that this was something worth looking at. I spoke about it to the doctor and offered him £60 for it. He laughed and said, " If you multiply your offer by three I might think about it " ; and then he told me how he had acquired this valuable clock.

He saw it, he related, in the house of a patient

whom he attended for some little time. He always admired the clock, and in course of time he sent his bill of £15 to the patient, with the remark that if he liked to pay him half the bill, he would take the old clock for the other half. The patient accepted this offer gratefully, most gratefully, and, as the doctor naïvely said to me, "He—the patient—did not know if the clock was worth a five pound note, so he naturally thought I had treated him very well." In this remark one can see how he had no twinges of conscience. I am quite certain that in every other relation of life this doctor was a just, upright, and scrupulously honest man.

To return to the matter of dealers and Rings, I have never been able to understand how rich collectors of antiques, who attend provincial sales, can allow the dealers, merely because they are dealers, to buy fine antiques with little or no opposition. In London, at Christie's, you often see a collector competing with a dealer, and consequently good prices at such sales are nearly always realised.

I have in my mind a scene in an old mansion on the borders of the New Forest. In those far-off days I think £50 was about my bank balance—I mention this sad trifle for the sake of what follows. There was a sale of "effects" at this mansion, and in it were some very valuable pieces

of antique furniture, good pictures, and beautiful china. I can visualise even to-day the room where the sale was held. It was a large room and full of beautiful things. The first thing that struck me on entering this great room, which seemed expressly designed for family life and the most generous hospitality, was a magnificent Sheraton commode with a mirror above it decorated by Angelica Kaufmann, quite in its original condition, like everything else in that lovely old house untouched from the time it and they came from the fine craftsmen of the eighteenth century. The fate of this commode, by the way, has already been told by Mr. Vachell in *Quinneys'*.

There were about forty dealers in the room, and about the same number of private people. Among the latter were some rich landowners, retired bankers, merchants, etc., men whom I knew well as good buyers of antiques ; but all these amateurs seemed perfectly hypnotised that day. They allowed the dealers, by their conspiracy of silence, to buy all the valuable antiques, one after another, at their own price. I use the word "buy" ; I ought to say steal, for the arranged prices were perfectly monstrous.

I made a bold bid for a wonderful Chippendale carved screen, with a large panel of *petit-point*. I went up to £40. The dealers were extremely annoyed with me, for they said (one of the

fraternity told me) that they would have bought it for a "tenner" if it had not been for me. To this I angrily made answer that if my pocket had been half as full of money as my head of knowledge and my heart of appreciation of these things, they would not have been able to buy a single lot. The Chippendale screen cost them £42, and they knocked out, so I heard, £300 on it.

Some time after this sale was over and done with one of the private buyers happened to come into my establishment, and I asked him why he had not opposed those wicked dealers at the sale. He told me that he did not consider he possessed sufficient judgment to put a value on antiques, and that he therefore relied on a dealer. "Then," I said, "you don't mind paying two profits? The dealer who belongs to the Ring gets his profit, and should he hold the article after the Knock-Out, he will put another profit on to the article for the private buyer." For example, the screen was knocked down for £42; in the Ring it went to £300, which the dealers divided among themselves; then the holder would tell the private buyer that it cost £342, and would base his demand for a profit on that sum.

Four dealers belonging to a Ring heard of a small sale in a village where there were some few good things. It was about six miles from a railway station, and they had to walk, on a sultry summer day, to the village. They arrived

hot and weary at the house, and to their chagrin found a local dealer on the premises, who refused all their invitations to join in the Knock-Out. They saw that there were about eight or nine valuable lots to be sold, but how to circumvent the local dealer, whom I will call Jimmy, that was a problem. There was an hour and a half to wait for the sale, so the four went to the village, and over their glasses thought out a scheme to outwit their enemy. The result of this confabulation was that one of the four went back to the house and told Jimmy they had discovered in a place near by a very fine Chippendale carved armchair, and after having elaborated the elaborate carving, the conspirator said they reckoned it worth about £10, but the owner was sticking out for £15, and they would like Jimmy to come along and give his opinion about it.

Jimmy fell into the trap, and off he went. He was conducted to a cottage standing in a pretty garden. He found the other three there, very jovial and hearty, but when he got up to them they suddenly took hold of him, lifted him off his feet, and put him into an outhouse. They locked him in, and told him with chaff and apparent good nature that there he would have to bide till the sale was over. They had already bribed the old man of the cottage to give them the key of the outhouse, and had presented him

with five shillings with which to drink their health at the village inn until they returned.

They then went back to the sale, rejoicing, and caring not a button what Jimmy would say to them when he came out. The first valuable lot was put up, one of them made a bid, but he was outbidden, and outbidden again and again. This happened with every valuable lot for which the conspirators bid. Not one single lot did they obtain. All their spirits deserted them. They went back to the old man at the inn, and told him to go to his cottage and let out the man whom he would find in the outhouse. Two hours later, when these four forlorn and footweary dealers were waiting for the train, Jimmy turned up smiling, one of the valuable lots for which they had vainly made a bid ostentatiously in his hands. He laughed at them, and said he hoped they had had a good day, adding, with a sudden accession of angry indignation, "I thought you dirty tykes would be up to something, so I left word with the auctioneer's clerk to outbid you every time." Then, with a return to contemptuous good humour, he concluded, "If I couldn't give more than you fellows for antiques, I would go and drown myself."

The most tragic incident that ever came under my notice connected with the Knock-Out happened in this fashion. In the county town of Surrey

lived a man called "Tommy" by a wide circle of devoted friends. He had been a clerk on the railway, but in his spare time he went to sales and picked up various small things. He had the natural *flair* of a collector and a genuine "nose" for things that were old and valuable. At last, prospering in his amateur dealing, he gave up the job on the railway, got married, and started a small shop. He thrived uncommonly well. He was a character, and became very popular. It was he who first made me think of becoming a dealer when, with nerves unstrung and a heart in rebellion, I left London and the Stock Exchange for the peace of the Surrey hills. How much I learned from this simple man, and how fond I became of him!

I can see him now—a short, thick-set, brown-faced young fellow, who looked like a seafaring man, and was full of jollity and fun, and soon convinced people that he was a real good sportsman, and the kindest and gentlest of men. He was as full of mischief as a young boy. He had a habit of stealing up behind you and suddenly making a loud noise with his mouth, like the bursting of a paper bag; when you jumped and spun round with alarm, he would roar with laughter. A boy's heart went with this boyish horse-play. He was generous, open, friendly, and full of the frankest and most unsuspecting sympathy. I don't think anyone ever went to Tommy in

trouble and came away without brave kind words and a helpful gift. There was something very lovable and admirable in this half-educated man to whom had been given the genius for the true and beautiful.

He became a wonderful judge of antiques, and London dealers used to come down for week-ends to see if he had picked up any treasures. Other people besides dealers came to see him, and respected his judgment, and took his advice. He was very proud of some of these private clients. Lady Dorothy Nevill, Sir Algernon West, Mr. Justice Vaughan Williams, were among them, and he used to say how kind they were to him, and how happy he was when he could find anything which took their fancy. He was proud of his knowledge, and with confidence relied upon his instincts. Only once, so far as my experience of him goes, was his judgment at fault and his instinctive feeling in abeyance.

He had his favourite inn where he enjoyed his beer and a game of cribbage. One evening he was taking his ease in this old hostel, when in came George the Gypo. George was a man who had a pony and cart and used it to go round the villages with new crockery ware, selling it or exchanging it for old—new lamps for old. In those days he used to pick up some wonderful things, and always brought them to Tommy, whom he trusted and respected. On this occasion

he brought into the inn what he called the find of his life, a carved ivory plaque under glass, and lavishly framed. He said he wanted "twenty quid" for it. Tommy was doubtful about it, but said he would give him a fiver. For five pounds, after much discussion and some little hospitality, George parted with the find of his life.

The next day I was passing Tommy's shop and I saw him in the doorway looking at some object in his hand with strained attention. I stopped and asked him if he had found a treasure. He said, "I don't know; have a look and tell me what you think of it." He handed me the find of George the Gypo's life. "Why, Tommy," I said, "you know what this is? It is a fake, made of German plaster of paris to look like ivory." He caught my arm and whispered quickly, "Hush! For God's sake say no more, because," looking round fearfully, "if my old woman learns that I have been taken in like this, I shall never hear the last of it." He added, shaking his fist, "Wait until I see George! I'll make him eat the blamed thing—frame, glass, and all."

Now for the tragedy. Many years later a sale was advertised to be held at one of the big mansions just outside the town, and many valuable things, furniture, silver, and pictures, were to be disposed of at this sale. The owner

had died, and the only relative, a son, had decided to let everything come under the hammer.

Tommy went to see what the house contained. After looking over most of the rooms, he came to the drawing room, and there suddenly found himself quite hypnotised by a portrait of a lady of the 18th century. Tommy had a way, when looking at anything with great seriousness, of pulling his cap well over his forehead, and standing with his hands behind his back, his legs well apart, his feet firm planted, his eyes screwed up to pins' points. He was in this pose before the fascinating portrait when, as he told me afterwards, a young gentleman came up to him and asked if he admired the picture. Tommy scarcely looked at his questioner as he answered, "Rather." The rejoinder woke him up a bit. "What would you give for it?" the youth asked. Tommy said, "What would I give for it? Why, all I have in my pocket." The youth said laughingly, "How much is that?" Tommy looked at him, had a feeling that he was someone in authority, and instantly pulled out his pocket book. He counted out ten £5 notes. The young gentleman smiled. "All right," he said; "you shall have it for fifty pounds. I will sell it to you. These things happen to be mine." He called over to him the head sale porter, and gave him instructions to hand the picture to Tommy. Then he shook hands with the bewitched Tommy,

wished him the best of luck with the picture, and strolled away evidently amused by his encounter.

Tommy was soon off with the picture. He did not attend the sale, which was the next day, but, convinced that the picture was a very valuable painting, went off to see one of the leading picture dealers in London. Before leaving home, he put the picture in his sitting room, which was upstairs, and told his wife on no account to show it to anyone.

While he was in London, several of the dealers came down for the sale, and naturally looked for Tommy, as it was to be held on his ground and he belonged to the Ring. They asked the head sale porter if he had seen Tommy, and from him learned the story of the picture deal on the day before. When the sale was over, four of these men—the leader of whom I will call “Joss”—went to Tommy’s shop, and asked his wife where Tommy was. She knew them well, and replied that he had gone to London. They said they would wait for his return. These men knew his house, and made for the upstairs sitting-room. Tommy’s wife, instead of locking the door, as she should have done, had left it open, and these four worthies at once saw the picture. Imagine their delight. One of them went out for a bottle of whiskey and cigars, and on his return they proceeded to knock out Tommy’s picture. It was held by Joss for £2,000.

Tommy returned from London to find the dealers in his room. Joss said, "We heard all about your deal at the house. You're a lucky bounder, you are. We have knocked out the picture, and here's four hundred pounds for you, a fifth part of the Knock-Out money, and fifty in notes, the price you paid for it."

Tommy was dumbfounded; he could not say anything; he did not possess the money to outbid £2,000; he had a rope round his neck; he belonged to the Knock-Out Ring, and had to abide by the rules; in short, he was obliged to settle with them, otherwise he would not have been able to participate in any of the Knock-Out settlements in future. But he felt he had been swindled, and it hurt him like fire.

Two days later he received a letter from the Bond Street dealer whom he had consulted, stating that it was useless for him to come down to Surrey, as he had just bought a portrait of a Lady by Romney, which was evidently the very picture Tommy had described to him.

Some time later Tommy heard that Joss had sold the picture to this dealer for eight thousand guineas. From that day he took the matter so much to heart that he lost all savour in life; drink got a hold of him, he neglected his business, everything went from him.

I had then left the neighbourhood and was back in London. It was not until I myself had

embarked on the life of a dealer that I heard the sad ending of Tommy. He died a miserable death in the county hospital, utterly alone. His wife had left him, and his business had fallen into ruins. Here was one of the best and biggest-hearted men I have ever met, and he died prematurely, that big heart of his broken by a gang of scoundrels, he, who had a genius which might well have made him one of the leading dealers in antiques. Commercialism is a deadly enemy of art.

Poor Tommy ! God rest his soul.

CHAPTER V

RANDOM MEMORIES OF NOTABLE CLIENTS

IN my first year as a dealer, when I started with a little lock-up shop, my first notable client I think was Mr. Montague Guest, now gone. He was a great collector, and a most astute bargainer. One of my first deals with him was over a piece of Dr. Wall Worcester. I forget the price, but it was somewhere on the verge of £10, perhaps a little over; it may have been £12. Whatever it was, I quoted the figure to him, and without a moment's pause he divided it by two, offering me either £5 or £6. Of course I refused this unreasonable offer, and at once Mr. Guest set down the piece of china and walked out of the shop. But suddenly he returned again. "I'll give you seven pounds," he said. Again I refused and again he left me. After a longer interval he came back and offered me eight pounds. Once more I refused. And so it went on until I got my price.

It was in this way he and I always dealt. At first I rather resented his overbearing manner, his attempt, as it were, to hector me into submission, but I found in time it was only his way,

and that he thoroughly enjoyed a hard fight over a few pounds. He turned out quite a good friend to me, introduced a number of his own friends, members of the Royal Yacht Squadron, and spoke about me, behind my back, in a most kind and favourable way. But he would introduce his fashionable acquaintances to me always in this way : " Our friend here is shockingly dear, but you can depend on his goods being genuine."

About this time I wrote a pamphlet on English drinking glasses. Nobody knew anything about the subject, or very little, in those days, and I wrote this little treatise in the hope that collectors would take an interest in these old-world glasses and their great varieties ; glass, as the reader may remember, being my earliest enthusiasm.

Mr. Guest came in one day, the first week in August, when King Edward VII. was lying in his yacht off Cowes, and asked me to give him a copy of my pamphlet. He came in to see me again, about ten days afterwards, and said that he had given my treatise to the King, and that His Majesty read it and told him expressly to tell me that he considered it extremely interesting. Within a week I had a letter from the King, thanking me for the pamphlet. Thus did Mr. Montague Guest help me to create in the collector a feeling for old English drinking glasses.

My next considerable client, who indeed was a dear friend to me, was Major Sir Edward

Coates, now, alas, dead and gone. He was a very keen collector. At that time (1903) he had the best known collection of colour prints in England. I started him on quite another line—the collection of English drinking glasses. He became an enthusiast. How amusing it was to see this baronet and Member of Parliament sitting right in my display window, arrayed in yachting costume, blue coat and white trousers, minutely examining the drinking glasses set out before him, and sublimely unconscious of the stares of passers-by. I insisted that he should learn how a genuine drinking glass differed from the spurious, and how he should learn to distinguish between one kind of glass and another. It was a great pleasure to deal with so intelligent and so enthusiastic a man, and one who openly rejoiced like a boy over his finds, and who was so grateful and courteous. I used to miss him when the yachting season was over. Every year he would give me a day's cruise on his delightful yacht the *Amethyst*, and every year I looked forward to that day in my life as one to be recorded in red letters. He had some of his wonderful colour prints on the yacht, and we would talk about them together very lovingly. Sometimes I had heard of a picture or a few chairs or something rare and beautiful in the country, and off we would go together as excited as anything to see if they were worth buying.

If on these excursions we discovered a real gem he was as happy as a schoolboy. Those were indeed halcyon days.

Some members of the Services, both soldiers and sailors, were in those days keen collectors. One tale of a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy is interesting. He came in to me and announced that he was stationed at Southsea and wanted to furnish his rooms over there with old furniture, but he said his means were limited, under £300. In those days, about 1905 or 1906, I forget the year, that amount would buy a few really good things. For instance, I remember he had a charming 4ft. 6in. Sheraton sideboard for £18, which would fetch to-day from £50 to £60. Anyhow, I got together chairs and tables, a few prints, some bits of china, etc., and he spent about £320. We made an agreement that when he had to move to another station, I would take back his purchases less 10 per cent. For two years I lost sight of this officer, when one day he came in to say that he had to go to the China Station. I said I supposed he wanted me to take back his things. He said, "Of course you have the option, but what has happened is this: a friend of mine desires to buy my antiques, and has had a London dealer down to give a valuation; this valuation comes to £650, and at that price the dealer himself is willing to buy." I rejected my option, to the honest young officer's evident

relief, and it was a pleasure to me to know that his little investment had turned out so profitably.

There is a sequel to this story. A well-known admiral became Commander-in-Chief of Portsmouth, and came into my place and said he had been advised by someone that if he wanted genuine antiques to be sure to visit me. He had just come from the China station, so I put two and two together, and presumed my naval client had said a good word for me. This famous admiral was Sir Hedworth Meux. He patronised me extensively, and I remember he purchased a wonderful William and Mary marquetry chest of drawers on its original stand, which he told me he placed in his hall, and that when our present King was shooting at his place he admired this piece immensely. Much came of the admiral's patronage.

Among lawyers, doctors, and clergymen I found many keen collectors. A celebrated K.C. was a great china collector. I remember his delight in securing the largest Oriental bowl I ever possessed, it was quite thirty-six inches in diameter, with hunting scenes round it, and it was without a crack or blemish. He was so anxious about getting it home safely that he helped me to pack it in a box, and then hired a motor-car specially to have it delivered at his residence in London.

I have met many authors as collectors. The

author of Captain Kidd was very fond of antiques, and used to tell me some very funny stories. Mr. Vachell, the author and playwright, was one of my most constant visitors. I have had very many cheerful hours with him, some record of which is made in his pleasant book, *Fellow Travellers*. The conception of *Quinneys'* was formed in my establishment, I think I may claim was prompted by me, and some stories of the tricks of the trade, as I knew it, and some stories concerning myself as he treated them, helped to make both the book and the play a great success.

Mrs. Cornwallis-West, and her two daughters, Princess Henry of Pless and the then Duchess of Westminster, were frequent visitors to my establishment before the war; they were all keen collectors. The mother was very amusing in the manner of her bargain hunting. The way she pooh-poohed the article she desired to secure, and ejaculated with horror at the prices, used to set me smiling. In the early days of our acquaintance I said to her, "Dear lady, you must not imagine that you are now bargain hunting on the quays in Dublin." She wheeled round on me, and demanded, "What do you know about Dublin and its quays?" I told her that I had been in that happy hunting ground of the collector many years ago, knew every inch of it, and knew the method of dealing with the sellers.

From that time we became fast friends, and many a good colour print I found for her in my earlier days of dealing, prints that are worth to-day at least ten times the price she gave me, and not always too willingly.

One day the Duchess of Westminster came in with her father, Colonel Cornwallis-West, a dear kindly old gentleman. It charmed me to see the daughter taking the various things she discovered to her father, and saying, "How do you like that, daddy dear?"

The sequel of this visit was particularly upsetting and exasperating to me. The Duchess bought a very fine Empire table candelabra; she secured it, because, she told me, the King—the late King Edward—was very fond of such things, and as he was going to visit Eaton Hall she wanted it for his table. I had it packed with the greatest care, but to my horror I had a letter from the Duchess to say that the Railway Company had managed to break it badly. Of course I took it back, but it was broken beyond all repair. This is the most trying thing that a collector and dealer has to put up with, because even if one obtained compensation, which one rarely does, all the money in the world cannot replace these beautiful creations of a by-gone age.

Just before the end of the Great War I had a letter from Mrs. Cornwallis-West asking me to call

and see her at Newlands Manor. It was a beautiful summer day when I motored out to see her, but the cloud of the great scandal which had fallen on this family seemed to hang over the place and take all the joy out of the sunlight. The poor lady was greatly altered, but she met me with a cheery smile and said, "Hullo, Irishman; I want you to have some of the old bargains I picked up in my young days on the quays." But the cheeriness of this once famous beauty did not deceive me. The tragedy of her heart was evident enough.

She brought some beautiful bits of Waterford glass to me, which I purchased, and then she asked me if I would buy some of her furniture, bits of painful and pleasant associations, one piece in particular—a satinwood tambour-topped writing table; this, she said, all her old friends had used—the late King Edward, the present King, and the ex-Kaiser of Germany. I bought it and several other things as well. She said to me, "Don't say a word to my husband about buying these things when you see him in the next room; he hates to think of anything going."

I saw the dear old colonel sitting in a chair in the sunshine. It did not require a doctor's eye to see he was dying. But he recognised me at once, and said he was pleased to see me, and hoped I was stopping to have a cup of tea with

him, which I assured him was the cause of my visit, remembering his wife's warning.

Mrs. Cornwallis-West took me into the beautiful grounds, and I sat with her under one of the fine trees. She then said, "I suppose you have heard of the dreadful scandal?" I nodded. She suddenly exclaimed, "Oh, man, man, is there no more charity in the world! Here am I, an old broken woman, who in the spirit of a mother did everything to give comfort and joy to our poor wounded and broken boys back from the war. I mothered and loved them as my own; but the vile, vile minds of the creatures of this earth have put the very worst construction on my action." The poor lady broke down and wept. It was very distressing to me, and the only comfort I could give her was to say, "The world, through the war, was in a state of chaos, in fact, the hell of the war has destroyed man's heavenly loving-kindness, but only for a little while."

I went in and had a cup of tea with her, the old colonel being present. Just as I was leaving, Mrs. Cornwallis-West handed me an old Dutch silver holy-water stoup, and said with real emotion, "Please give this to your dear wife; I know she is a good Catholic; ask her to pray for me." Poor lady, and poor old colonel; they were both dead within eighteen months of this visit.

I had the patronage of Sir Sidney Greville, to my mind one of the best amateur judges of antique furniture in England. He had a particularly charming manner, always in his nice way apologising for giving so much trouble in making his purchases. Of latter years he took to collecting walnut furniture, and I had the pleasure of finding for him one or two good specimens, especially a Charles II. walnut table which became one of his particular favourites. The last time I saw him was at the sale of antiques belonging to the late Baroness Burdett Coutts at Christie's. He told me on that occasion, heartily shaking my hand, that he could never forget me so long as he had his beautiful Charles II. table—his great joy—for the possession of which he would always be grateful.

How I came by this table is a tale in itself. One of the Rappers, who was working in the district of Southampton, came and mentioned to me that there was a very fine walnut table in one of the suburbs, but that he could not get the woman to sell it; if I went personally, he said, I might be able to obtain it. The Rapper took me to the house, which was a very small villa with the brass plate of a dressmaker on the door, hardly the place in which to find a very fine piece of furniture. A superior looking woman came to the door and said, "I know you, Mr. Rudd" (the name I traded under) "but that man behind

you said he was Mr. Rudd, and I knew better. I suppose you have come to see my table?" She led the way into her little sitting room and there, against the wall, was one of the best specimens of the 17th century walnut table I ever saw. It had an oyster-wood marquetry top, with barley sugar or corkscrew legs, and a beautifully shaped under-stretcher. It was in perfect condition, and with the wonderful patina untouched. I asked her if she would sell to me. She said, "How much will you give? I have always heard you are fair in your purchases, and when I intended to sell it I was coming to see you." I offered a price which she accepted, but with this strange proviso, that she would not part with it for eighteen months. She gave no reason for this proviso; there it was, and I had to abide by it. I waited, and heard in the meanwhile that the Rapper had tried very hard to get the table on his own account. He took dealers from London, Reading, and Oxford to this little villa with the brass plate on the door, and they offered considerably more than I had done; but the old dressmaker was inexorable. "The table belongs," she said, "to Mr. Rudd, and at the date I promised he shall take it away." She kept her word. To the very month she came to me and told me I might take the table away. I, knowing that she had been offered certainly forty per cent. more than I had offered, suggested

that I should give her some few pounds more for her treasure, but she would not accept another farthing. A strange, honourable, and noble woman. Some mystery, I think, hovered about her life. I never knew why I had to wait those eighteen months.

I had already told Sir Sidney Greville of this table and the condition of waiting; when I obtained it, I sent it on to St. James's Palace, in answer to which I had a most eloquent letter of thanks. Sir Sidney showed his gratitude by bringing all his friends to me. I remember him on one occasion bringing to my shop the whole of a house-party from Lord Northbrook's, five motor-cars full! He tried to place for me with their Majesties a wonderful Charles II. walnut marquetry writing table, but unfortunately it was too long, about eight inches or so, for a particular recess to be filled by some such table. It was always pleasant to have a deal with him, for he was so cheery, so full of thanks, and knew so intimately the collector's art. Mentioning this Charles II. writing table, which came from Banbury, reminds me that I used to find the best bits of fine quality walnut in that neighbourhood. Oxfordshire and Berkshire seemed quite the home of early walnut.

I was greatly pleased to have the friendship of the late Mr. A. Davis, of Bond Street, London, antiquary to the Royal Family. He was very

fond of yachting, and every summer he used to cruise about the Solent. On these periodical visits he spent a good deal of time with me. I suppose he was the best judge of antique French furniture, and the contemporary furnishing of pictures, bronze, and ormolu, etc., etc., that we ever had. I never made a study of French furniture, because I did not care much about it, but he was an enthusiast, and used to take considerable trouble to give me hints on this matter, so that I might know the very best when I came across it. His fund of information I found of considerable value to me when I was called in by Mr. Pierpont Morgan to do the valuation of his marvellous collection in this country.

I remember one summer I found among some of my purchases a miniature calendar, about an inch square, and with about eight or ten leaves, the frontispiece of which was a portrait of the Duke and Duchess of Teck on the occasion of their marriage. Mr. Davis was in my place at the time. I showed it to him, and he said he would like to purchase it to give to Queen Mary. I said that he could have it as a gift, and he took it with gratitude, saying that he would tell Her Majesty that I sent it to her. When he came down later he said that the Queen was delighted to have it, and commanded him to convey her thanks to me.

I have made several indirect contributions to the literature of collecting. In my early days of dealing I went in seriously for collecting English pottery, and in time gathered together some rare and fine specimens. Mr. Arthur Haydon was writing a book on English Pottery, and came to me for fine specimens to reproduce in his book. The best pieces I had already disposed of to clients of mine, but I was fortunate enough to get photographs of these fine specimens, and they are now to be seen in Mr. Haydon's book *Chats on English Earthenware*. Mr. Haydon suitably acknowledged my contribution in his preface. Mr. F. W. Hackwood, writing a book on inns and ale-houses, desired information on the drinking glasses used in the earlier period of the ale-houses, so I wrote him a short account for his book and gave him some photographs of the type of glasses used. My direct contributions to the literature of collecting took the form of articles in the *Connoisseur*, under the *nom de plume* of Pontil.

My association with Mr. Vachell has been already mentioned. The lacquer cabinet which led to the conception of *Quinneys'* is described in *Fellow Travellers*; but how my stories came to form a part of the life of Quinney may be told in this place.

I remember Mr. Vachell asking me one day when I was lunching with him at a café in the High Street to write down for him some of the

incidents of my career as a dealer. My answer at the time was, "When the spirit moves me I will do so with pleasure, but I could not sit down and write at the word of command." I think it was a month later, not very many months before the war, that I went home one evening and I found, what was exceptionally rare, that my dear wife was out. I felt quite at a loss in consequence. The garden had no charm for me. I did not feel that I wanted my tea. For some time I moved about, rather disconsolate. Then I sat down in my easy chair, and thought what shall I do with myself? The thought of Mr. Vachell's wish came to my mind. I ordered a cup of tea, got a writing block and a pencil, and sat down and wrote away from about five o'clock till after seven. I finished just as my wife entered. At the sight of her dear face I bundled the papers just as they were into an envelope and addressed them to Mr. Vachell. All the incidents I gave were true, just as true as these told here, and they flowed out of the end of my pencil at such a rate that my hand was quite tired when I had finished.

How I took the trading name of Rudd was in this fashion. For family reasons I was asked not to use my own name as a dealer. I rather resented this, but for peace and quietness agreed. Just before opening my little shop, I went to a sale, and bought a grandfather clock. The

auctioneer asked, "What name?" I called out my own name of Rohan. He said, "Rudd?" I said, "Yes, put it down R U double D," and from that time for fifteen years I was known as Rudd.

I certainly had no love for the name, but I got positively to dislike it when I was induced, some three years before the war, to turn the business into a limited company. The inducement put before me was that, if anything happened to me, my family could liquidate the whole affair so much easier as a limited liability company. Anyhow, I consented. My wife was with me at the final arrangement, and she then uttered a true prophecy. She said to the gentleman who was floating the company, "If war should come, how about the shares?" The answer was that shares would be more valuable than chairs, but my wife doubted it. She was right. She opposed the whole thing, and told me I should regret it as long as I lived. Her instinct was better than my judgment. The moment my little business became Rudd Limited, the soul of the thing seemed to go out of it. Commercialism entered; the trading aspect was always in front of me—documents to be signed, the whole paraphernalia of finance, and a sickening sense of business, business, business. I regretted the losing of that intimacy and friendliness which had always characterised my dealing. When

in the beginning of the last year of the war I had a breakdown in nerves and health, and the doctors forbade me travelling by train sixty miles there and back to my business, I threw up the whole of it, gave up the name I had made fairly famous, and started afresh, when my health returned, in the little business at Bournemouth which is intimate, and my own, and for my son.

My wife's solicitor told my wife at the time when I gave it all up, "You may have buried Rudd, but it will take a long time to kill the name," and so it has. There are clients who call me Rudd to this day.

Sir Hedworth Meux is one of those who still think of me as Rudd. When I saw him constantly he was a keen collector, very fond of Oriental china, and had gained a good knowledge of the fine periods in the porcelain of the Orient.

One day, after purchasing a few things from me, he said he was very pleased with my collection which he had not exhausted, but he wanted to meet his wife and would come back again. Within an hour he returned, bringing his most charming wife along with him. She was particularly jolly and made one at home with her at once. I was greatly amused at her saying the moment she got into my establishment, "Oh, Mr. Rudd, there are some beautiful prawns in a fish shop just below; would you mind sending

out for some? I simply adore prawns." I did as she asked, and told her she should eat her prawns in state. I made her sit in a beautiful Chippendale chair, and on a Worcester plate I served her with the pink prawns. There she sat like a queen, and ate her prawns, and told us that she thoroughly enjoyed them, and joked and laughed, and made us feel how happy life can be when we are simple and natural and kind.

I am not by any means an expert in Oriental china, but I have a fair knowledge and can glean the chaff from the wheat. Admiral Meux, at any rate, never had cause to complain of my ignorance. We often discussed Oriental, and I found him one or two very good bits. One day, a Thursday, I had a photograph from a Tenby dealer of a pair of Ming storks. So far as the picture showed they seemed very good; the dealer said they belonged to some old retired colonel, who had lived at Tenby for many years. The colonel knew they were valuable, and wanted £60 for the pair. The dealer said he did not know enough about Oriental china to give such a price, so he sent the photograph to me, asking, if I did not want them, to return the photograph by the Saturday. I at once wrote to Admiral Meux, and he came over the next afternoon, Friday. He said he considered from the photograph that the storks were quite good, and that as I knew the dealer for a respectable man, he

would take his chance, and buy them. I looked up the time-table, and found I could not get direct to Tenby that night, but as it was essential to be there on Saturday, I went a roundabout journey, and by means of a long motor drive got to Tenby in the early hours of Saturday morning. I saw the storks at the dealer's shop about nine, came to the conclusion they were very good, paid for them, had them packed, and was on my way back again just about ten o'clock.

The admiral came in on the Monday morning. He was delighted with the birds. He handled them with great and almost cooing pleasure. Then he turned round to express his gratitude to me. There is no music to my mind like the praise of a good friend and client over his purchases.

Naval men were keen collectors of the old aquatints and colour prints of the naval engagements at the time of Nelson. I was very fortunate in collecting a very good series of these old prints. I remember a set of four particularly good ones which I sold to a captain in the Navy. I forget the name of the cruiser he was on, but he wanted the prints for his cabin. This cruiser was wrecked some time later off Lundy Island, and I often wondered if those colour prints were saved.

Writing of wrecks reminds me of the ill-fated

Titanic. I had sold some thirty tons of old oak beams, doors, etc., to an American, and I shipped them on the *Titanic*. The day the vessel sailed, a friend of mine who knew that I had shipped this valuable old oak on the vessel, said to me, "You nearly lost all your oak this afternoon; there was a great displacement of water in the docks as the *Titanic* was going out, and she broke away from her tugs, and the Dock authorities thought she would smash into the pier." Coming events sometimes cast their shadows before them with a vengeance; in this instance, it was not many days after that I heard of the dreadful disaster. My poor little cargo of oak was of little consequence in comparison with the dreadful loss of life. But it did make me feel that in a way I had shared in that great loss, and I can still visualise the ancient oak I had so lovingly handled lying fathoms deep in the ocean, a loss to humanity.

Among other notable naval officers who came my way were Admiral Egerton and Admiral Sir Percy Scott. The latter was one of the briskest and keenest men I have ever had to do with. How characteristic of him it was to exclaim on catching sight of an early copper coal scuttle, which had been kept in a beautiful condition, "Ah, that's the sort of thing I like to see." Its brightness appealed to him, and he bought it on

that account. He liked everything to be ship-shape, solid, good, useful, and nobly plain.

During the war it was quite a practice for officers on their way to France to come in and buy a miniature or print or some small thing to send home—just a last beautiful thing before going on their terrible adventure. A reflective writer might make a deal of this : the last thoughts of brave men expressing themselves in beautiful things for those they loved. Why should such men, who cannot love war, and who must hate modern war, be sacrificed on the bloody altar of political ambition and international misunderstanding ? Since those terrible days, which shook us all to pieces, and have made life so different for most of us, I have met several recipients of these last gifts, and they have told me what those farewell presents meant to them, and have thanked me for the little covering letter which as a rule I ventured to send with the gift, wishing the giver the best of fortune, viz. a return home to his dear loved ones.

The Stage came my way on occasion. Among the many actors I might mention, the late Sir George Alexander comes first to my mind. He was a great lover of the furnishings of the 18th century, and, I need hardly add, knew well what he was about. He had an elegant, and yet a sincere and charming manner. I remember his first words to me : “ I hear so well of you from

all my friends, Mr. Rudd—a satisfied collector is the finest advertisement in the world.” And so it has been ; I am thankful to say that personal recommendations from satisfied collectors have been the bricks out of which I have built up my little shrine of art.

Ellen Terry’s visits to me were always joyous occasions. I remember one of these occasions in particular. She had brought her own company to the theatre at Southampton, I think it was in 1908 ; and one afternoon she introduced the entire company into my place ; it was like a party of happy school children. They ran all over the place. I had workshops and a big store place at the back, which we called the hospital. Pieces of beautiful furniture out of repair were stacked up there waiting for the doctors, i.e. the cabinet makers. I, as chief physician, looked after and watched with joy the restoration of these pieces ; one who loves old furniture will quite understand my feelings.

Into this hospital and everywhere else our queen of actresses, herself as active as the youngest among them, led all those friends of hers ; shrieks of joy at finding something which pleased or surprised rang echoing into the street. It was quite an uproarious two hours. The way Queen Ellen ran up ladders and got herself quite grimy and dirty in handling all those bits of by-gone days amazed and amused me. But the

best was to come when we all returned to my sanctuary, and I gave a lecture on old china, and talked about the joy of craftsmanship, and answered the thousand questions which dear Ellen Terry rained upon me. Just before leaving she asked for a sheet of paper, and enquired how many I had in my family? I told her that four, including myself, were at home. Then she wrote on the paper, "Please give Mr. Rudd four best seats in the house, or a nice box, whichever he desires," signing it with her name. I was told, some time after, that this was an especial honour, as she rarely gave free seats when under management.

Miss Julia Neilson and her husband and daughter, Miss Neilson Terry, have been clients of mine for many years. I remember Julia Neilson bringing her daughter to see me in short frocks. The latter looks to me to-day when she wants some rare bits of Waterford glass; and I am always sure of a visit from any of the family whenever they are in the neighbourhood of Bournemouth.

Allan Aynesworth, Sir Martin Harvey, Mr. Boucicault, and Miss Vanbrugh, all have visited and patronised me; also that omnivorous collector George Robey. It was only recently that he heard I had a particularly fine Sheraton dining table. He was going to sing at the Winter Gardens, and he gave himself about five minutes

to run in to see the table. He came in with a rush and said, "Hullo, that's the table, is it? A fine one, too, genuine?" (emphasis on the *ine*) "but I need not ask you that question. How much?" The price was given. "Send it home, sweet home," was the rejoinder, and he was gone—a matter of three or four minutes.

Sir Henry Wood and his wife are ardent collectors, and I always look with pleasure to their visits, not for what they purchase, but they really enjoy looking at beautiful things, and one can dilate on a subject when his audience is thoroughly pleased to hear and know the origin of an article of vertu.

I wonder if Miss Mary Anderson (Madame de Navarro) remembers the letters I sent her in my early days of dealing, with little thumb-nail sketches on the margins of the paper to describe the pieces I had for disposal. I managed to find one or two pieces of pewter for her husband; my recollection goes back to a pewter chalice with which he was very pleased; this is quite eighteen years ago.

I have very pleasant recollections of several members of the Press. Mr. Edward Hudson, of *Country Life*, as is well known, is a very keen collector, and in my early days visited me periodically; I am glad to say I have had the pleasure of his custom quite recently. Sir Joseph and Lady Reed I met only since the war,

after finishing a European tour which Sir Joseph took for his health when the weary years of war came to an end. He came south before returning home and discovered me. Both his wife and he are great lovers of the beautiful, and I had some very pleasant days in their society, too short, for me, as they appreciated so much and so kindly my small endeavours. Later, however, Sir Joseph sent his confrère, Mr. Munro Sutherland, south from Newcastle to secure some of the garnerings of my collection, and the pleasant business relations with these, my kind friends from the north, still continue, and the praises by letter and word of mouth from them are always a pleasure and an encouragement.

Southampton being on the highway of the world, I naturally had visitors from all parts of the globe, especially America. The first interesting American who visited me (unfortunately I have forgotten his name) was a rather austere dark man garbed in black clothes, one whom you would take for a pedagogue or minister of religion. He was particularly interested in English china, and wanted some good specimens for an Institute, so he gave me an order to send out to him a cup and saucer of the various English porcelains of the eighteenth century. He deputed me to write cards giving descriptions and periods and makes of the various pieces I sent out to him,

which I did, and I had a very appreciative letter from him in return. The love of old English things in this grave and solemn American struck me as a thing worth thinking about—a straw blowing towards the union of the English-speaking world.

The American collector in the early days was very handicapped in collecting antiques of this country, for the simple reason that there was little known or seen in America of our early furniture, whereas we, however little knowledge we have of old things, are surrounded, as it were, by beautiful things, the environment of which must influence, in a greater or less degree, those who live amongst them. The American, on the other hand, had to depend on the dealer when he visited this country, and I regret to say that some thirty years ago many of these collectors were very badly taken in by unconscionable dealers. It has taken time to outlive those nefarious tricks, but during the last fifteen years American collectors have been able to hold their own in the collecting world. They have taken the example of the king of American collectors, the late Mr. Pierpont Morgan. He gathered together the various connoisseurs of the antique arts, pictures, china, furniture, etc., and satisfied himself that he had the very best advice, and by that means gave to his country the finest collection of antiques of the world that any one man ever gave to a nation.

He was most astute. I was told that he once bought a vase (of what sort it hardly matters) on the judgment of one of his connoisseur advisers. After putting the vase in a certain place he called in connoisseur adviser No. 2 and said to him, "I am sorry to tell you I am afraid I have been done. I bought this vase; what do you think of it?" Connoisseur No. 2 said, "My dear sir, that vase is a perfect specimen; in fact, I have been trying to buy it for years for Baron Rothschild."

Once you obtain the confidence of the American collector he is quite unrestrained, and will buy freely from you, but you have to get over the first hurdle, and that is insurmountable in some instances. It is the early days that have caused the hurdle. One must exercise patience and use plain, simple words to convey the reasons why and wherefore a piece of furniture is genuine. I am afraid that the race for gain makes one too hasty at times to instruct the uninitiated. Take or leave it won't do for the American. He is a good buyer, and does not mind the price, but he must be convinced and feel in his bones that he knows what he is buying.

I have had the patronage of some of the best of the collectors in America, presidents of insurance companies, bankers, and so forth. My most sincere thanks in this respect are largely due to a former United States Consul of Southampton. He was a dear, good man very fond of

the antique, but as he used to say to me with a laugh, "I cannot indulge." I remember so well, before he brought in his first friend from America to see me, he came to my place wearing a most serious air, and said, "I want a word with you in private." I ushered him into my little office, and he said, "You know your business, Mr. Rudd, don't you?" I said, "Well, that is well known in the town." He nodded his head gravely, but satisfied. "As consul for my country," he said, "I have asked you this pro-forma question, which ought never to have been asked; and I have asked it because I should not like my President to write to me and say, 'You have let me down; your great connoisseur and dealer of Southampton has sold George D. Higginbottom a worthless fake.' That could never be, could it?" he asked, and ended with a roar of laughter. After that he sent a stream of visitors to see me.

Among the Anglo-American set, Lady Cooper, of Hursley Park, was one of my best clients. I made her a good collection of English and Irish glass. I remember I once secured a beautiful Charles II. child's chair in walnut; its history was particularly interesting. One of our noble families had a son born in the year Charles II. returned to England and his throne; in honour of this event they cut down a fine walnut tree on the estate, and this child's chair with its

carved crown on the top held by Amorini was made—made in England, a part of English history. Lady Cooper was delighted to secure this historical relic, and asked me over to luncheon. I was to bring the chair with me, and place it wherever I chose in her beautiful house. I found the right place for it, and she and Sir George were delighted.

In collecting, the American is particularly interested to discover where a piece of porcelain was made, or the home of an old piece of furniture, and I have often remarked that love of certain places is expressed by them. Their forbears came from near, say, Derby—they will eagerly collect old Crown Derby, and so on. This intuitive love of a country is shown by them very much more so than by our own people. The prophets say that one day, when America might be under a great financial depression, they will readily sell the beautiful things they have bought here, but I am not of that opinion; the love of these beautiful old things they have acquired will be strong enough in most cases ever to prevent their return to the old country.

The most interesting Indian collector of English antiques I knew was the late Mr. Ratan Tata, who bought some good bits of English walnut furniture from me for Orleans House, Twickenham.

It was a shock to me on opening my morning paper on St. George's day of this year to see the announcement of the death of Colonel Mulliner. I had a great esteem for him as a connoisseur of the true type. It is a curious fact that I had had business dealings with him for some years before I had the pleasure of meeting him. It was in this way. He made periodical visits to America to see his clients and friends, and when he made these visits he generally looked in at my establishment and made a purchase; but on these visits I was fated never to meet him. My assistant told me a Major Mulliner (as he was then) had called in and bought a piece of furniture. It was dispatched to his chambers at the Albany, and in due course a cheque was sent by his secretary. It was only during the war that I knew he was practically the great firm of Lenygon, and it came about in this way. I saw a wonderful chair in the galleries of a friend of mine in Savile Row, London, and enquired the price. He said he had just sold it to Colonel Mulliner. I said that I had had business transactions with a Major Mulliner, probably it was the same man, and my friend said undoubtedly it was, as the colonel was always looking for fine things for his firm Lenygon's, or for gracing his own flat in the Albany.

Some months elapsed, when one day, after I had made my notable collection of glass in



Eighteenth Century Bureau Bookcase

London, a dealer in the West End said to me, "I have a message for you. Colonel Mulliner of the Albany is very anxious to meet you." I went to 7B The Albany and the colonel opened the door to me. I told him who I was. He said, "I am delighted to meet you. I have heard from various sources about you and your great knowledge of glass."

He took me into one of his rooms, which were beautifully furnished with very fine period furniture of the 17th and 18th century; glorious tapestries hung on the walls. Everything was in perfect taste. As I walked about those crowded apartments I had the feeling that I had passed from the roar and bustle of Piccadilly into a scene created by the genius of Balzac.

He had a most charming manner. A particularly handsome man, and very tall—I am six feet, but he seemed to tower over me—Colonel Mulliner with his upright figure, his penetrating eyes, and his commanding voice, made you feel that he was entitled to the head of the table wherever he might be. The courtesy that distinguished him expressed the connoisseur; the sternness of his eyes, the soldier and the racing man. The impression he made was one of great dignity and tremendous power. His good breeding made him gracious and charming to me, but I felt that it would not do to upset him in

any way, for a strong temper was there behind the stern eyes and their polite smiles. No man was more orderly in his life and regular in his habits. He went by clockwork to the Turkish Baths in Jermyn Street, and had his regular days and hours for attending to his racing stables, the affairs of Lenygon, and the business of Willet.

We sat down and chatted on general things, after I had admired his rich and wonderful collection. He then said to me, "Now I know about most of our beautiful things, but glass is beyond me, and I feel extremely fortunate in getting you to come and visit me. I have been to your place at Southampton many times in the last few years, and I generally saw glass there that pleased my eye, but I know little or nothing about it, and as I never seemed to be able to catch you, I did not worry about it; but as my friends are all keen to have some good specimens of old English and Irish glass, I want you to help me in obtaining it." That was the beginning of knowing this remarkable and masterful man.

Of course he wanted the best—super-best if possible—he was grandiose always. As he said to me one day, "I want antique furniture and furnishings which were used in palaces by princes and peers." He certainly did acquire some of the finest period furniture of this country; one has only got to look at Lenygon's book on

English furniture to see the wonderful and beautiful things that went through his hands. I obtained some good glass for him, and he was particularly generous in all his transactions.

One day, I think it was just after the last Red Cross sale of antiques at Christie's, I was passing Mr. Rochelle Thomas' establishment when his son saw me and said his father had bought a wonderful glass at Christie's, and that his father had said that "Mr. Rudd would like that." So I went in to Mr. Thomas' private room, and there on the table was a large glass surmounted with a cover. Mr. Thomas asked my opinion on it. I said it was an extraordinary rare type. "I am glad to hear you say that," was his rejoinder, "because in judgment on glass I consider your opinion is second to none." I thanked him and asked the price. He said he gave eighty-eight guineas for it the day previous, and I could have it for £100. I said "I will take it, but I am buying it for a client, so I will leave it with you, and my client will call for it."

I at once went to Colonel Mulliner and told him that I had just bought a glass that was one of the rarest types I had ever seen, in fact, I felt sure there was not a second one. I told him where it was, and how I had left it. He said he would like to buy it. I told him to go and see it, and if he did not care for it I could easily place it

elsewhere. He went to the shop and bought it for £100.¹

On my next visit to him he received me most cordially and said the glass was magnificent. He asked what profit I required. I replied : "None at all. It was a pleasure to secure such a glass for one who can appreciate excellence ; furthermore, you have always been so generous to me that I ask you to allow me to show my thanks to you in this way." He said, "I am going to impose once more on your kindness ; will you write a description and give the period of the glass ?" "That is easily done," I said, "because the history of the glass is already written by its maker."

The glass was (from memory) about twenty to twenty-two inches high, perfectly plain, with a cover, just for all the world like a huge wine glass. On the top of the cover was moulded the figure of a man's head with a cocked hat ; below this head was a blown knop ; in this knop was a Queen Anne shilling, dated 1709, which at once denoted for whom the head was meant—the great Marlborough—as on that date he achieved his victory of Malplaquet. The bowl was the ordinary early funnel shape standing on a baluster stem with another blown knop just above the base, with yet another Queen Anne shilling, dated 1714, the year of the death of Queen Anne.

¹ This glass fetched, quite recently at Christie's, 165 guineas.



Chippendale Tripod Coffee Table- Ireland

Therefore this glass was clearly a commemoration glass for a twofold purpose—the victory of Malplaquet and the death of Queen Anne. It was quite easy, then, to write a small article on this wonderful glass.

Colonel Mulliner afterwards presented me with a sketch of the glass which he had specially got done for me, also with his own book, *Lenygon on English Furniture*. We have lost a fine connoisseur and a real patron of the art world in Colonel Mulliner. R.I.P.

Mr. J. P. Heseltine, who is well known as one of the old and rare school of connoisseurs, visited me from time to time. He is one of the trustees of the National Gallery, and one day I had on the premises a particularly large cabriole-leg early Chippendale table, beautiful in colour and untouched. Mr. Heseltine saw it and asked the price. I think I said about £40. He said he wanted it for the lobby of the National Gallery. "Oh," I said, "if it is going to such a place, and I can always admire it when I go there, I will take practically cost." What that price was I cannot remember, anyhow I feel a certain amount of satisfaction that my table is now placed in one of our national institutions, especially as it happens to be the greatest art institution in the world.

Of the younger generation of collectors I have had the pleasure of finding beautiful things for Sir Harold Mackintosh and his brother, Mr. D. Mackintosh. Both of them have exceedingly good taste, and their judgment and knowledge were surprising to me ; that knowledge proved to me that the present generation is not taking to collect in the haphazard manner which was so prevalent in my young days.

I wish it were in my power to give a pen picture of the types of collectors I have met during my twenty-one years of dealing, showing those who are *collectors*, and all others whom I should call *acquirers*. The psychology of these types might have tempted Henry James to give the world a memorable novel, contrasting the charm and responsiveness of the one with the pettiness and meanness of the other.

The collector is the lover of the beautiful ; price, if he is well off, never enters his head. The joy of possession is sufficient ; cost is nothing. He buys because he loves, not to exhibit his purchase and tell his friends what a lot of money it cost. I can exemplify what I mean by an incident that happened many years ago.

It came to my ears that a lady in a suburb of Southampton had a valuable colour print. I called on her in the hope of purchasing it. I was received by her most kindly. She was a woman of over forty, very thin and spare. I

can see her now, fragile to a degree, long, thin, tapering fingers, exceedingly neat in her dress, but the material showing by its rustiness the poverty of the wearer.

She took me into a room where I found a few horse-hair chairs, a sofa, a small table, and a very worn carpet. Over the mantelpiece was the colour print I was in quest of, a wonderful print indeed of Sophia Western after Romney, engraved by J. R. Smith. This print is not large, but by its beauty it, so to speak, filled the room. It was in fine state and undoubtedly a proof print. When I think of the true collector, I never forget the eyes of the impoverished lady as she looked on this beautiful print, this real treasure, this joy, this companion, which she virtually worshipped.

She told me her story. She was the only daughter of a doctor long since dead. She had one brother who went to Canada; everything was sold for his voyage and outfit, but unfortunately he did not make good, and the few things she had remaining were sold to send him more money. She had now not heard from him for five or six years. She had kept back from her sacrifice this one engraving, which she and her mother had loved together. She knew even in those days that it would realise many pounds, but she could not bring herself to part with it. She only had a fifty pound annuity to live on. The poverty of this gentlewoman really hurt;

you could see that a little nourishment would be a god-send to her ; but no, all through those grinding years she could not part with her engraving. It was not so much the sentimental side of the matter, she told me, which had hindered her from selling, but the character of the picture ; it radiated its beauty on her ; if she parted with it the world would become inexpressibly drab and dreary to her.

Now the look in the eyes of this dear lady I watch for in the true collector, and the irony of fate seems to be that many of those who have this unmistakable look do not possess the means to gain the things they love. I have met many collectors (when I use the word I mean in the true sense of the meaning) who have only started collecting late in life, and the tale they always tell me is that they did not possess the means in their younger days to buy what they wanted, and that it was only when fortune had favoured them that they were able to enjoy this great pleasure—the pleasure of possessing the beautiful things they loved.

The *acquirer* is one who has ample means and considers it the thing to have rare and fine things in his possession. It is a part of his snobbishness. Let him know that there is a rare piece of furniture or picture or some priceless vases to be had, and he is out on the hunt to acquire them. To

possess an article that nobody else has is his joy ; to tell you that a picture is worth £10,000 is more pleasure to him than to contemplate its beauty.

I remember one of this type calling on me once, when I had a pair of beautiful Sheffield candelabra. They were of exquisite make and a rare type of Adam's design—a pleasure to see. This gentleman saw them, and asked the price, which was quite modest, about £12 the pair. He turned away from them at once, the price was not high enough to please him. His eyes alighted on a pottery jug put away in one of the cabinets by itself. This jug was a Jenny or woman Toby jug by Ralph Ward, of bright translucent colours, a rare type. He asked why this jug was put away in a special cabinet. I told him it was rare, in fact, very rare. He enquired the price. In the ordinary way, at that time, I should have been glad to have taken £25 for it, but I did not like the manner of this gentleman, so I said I wanted £60 for the jug. He promptly bought it and took it away triumphantly in his Rolls-Royce standing at the door. But it was only a few years later that a similar jug was sold for over five times this price, so he did quite well by acquiring my piece, bad luck to him !

One of the gratifying pleasures that I have had in my career as a dealer is to have collected

beautiful things for several members of one family, both here and in Ireland, sisters and brothers ; the recommendation of one has brought the other, and the patronage has continued for years. As a rule I find that these families have the natural *flair* for collecting beautiful things.

An interesting incident of this kind occurred in 1919. A tall lady, beautifully dressed and distinguished, came into my present establishment one day and began to look about her. The proud, handsome, and noble face seemed familiar to me. She asked the price of a bracket clock in the window, I mentioned it, and she said, "I will have it." She then saw some other article ; the price was asked and she at once purchased. This went on with several other pieces, until she had purchased quite a collection. I said to her, "Excuse me, but this is a very unorthodox way of purchasing things in an antique shop. The new visitors to my establishment generally want to know something of the history or period of their purchases, and there is always a certain amount of—well—diffidence in buying." She smiled, and made answer, "I am only acting on my solicitor's advice, a gentleman residing in Arlington Street. He purchased some things of you earlier in the year, and was evidently so satisfied, that on hearing I was going to Bournemouth, he said, 'If you are looking for antiques, go and see Mr. Rohan in the Arcade ;

you can buy from him with your eyes shut.' ”
This was praise indeed !

I still had it in my mind that I had met this lady before. I said, “ I presume, by your selection, you have bought many beautiful things before.” “ Oh, yes,” was her rejoinder ; “ my husband and I, in his lifetime, were always buying antiques on our travels. One of the most interesting pieces we ever bought was an early oak Jacobean bed with a carved canopy. My husband and I were taking our eldest son to Osborne, and on passing through Southampton we found this oak bed in an antique shop there, kept by a Mr. Rudd. We purchased it for £80. It was valued recently for probate at £200.”

Before she had finished the story I knew who she was, one of a family of which many members have patronised me. I then told her that I had sold her that bed, and she recalled me to her memory, though we had not met for at least twelve years ; she then said that she had already told a younger son who was with her that my present establishment was a pocket edition of the old place in Southampton, both were arranged with so sure an artistic taste.

I quite understand that the would-be collector goes into an establishment of which he has no knowledge with *caveat emptor* in his mind. But it is in the province of a dealer, if he knows

his business, to make his visitors understand the difference between the real and the sham. Take, for one example, eighteenth century mahogany chairs, whether they be Chippendale, Hepplewhite, or any other maker of that period. Let me explain by means of an incident that happened to me many years ago.

I was visiting a small country town, and found a small antique shop; looking through the window I noticed some, presumably, Chippendale chairs. I entered. Nobody was about, so I got hold of one of the chairs, took out the loose or trafilgar seat, and turned the chair over. As I was examining the chair, a voice called out, "Hullo, guv'nor, looking for the 'all mark?" I turned round and saw the proprietor. No doubt he meant to be facetious by his remark, but I answered him in all seriousness, "Just what I am looking for."

One of the hall marks of a genuine antique chair is that the *outside* edge of the front legs should be worn, in fact quite rounded by wear; and the *outside* edge of the back legs should be similarly worn, for this reason: our forefathers of the eighteenth century, when taking a chair to the dinner table, always took hold of the top rail of the back of the chair and dragged it on the front legs to the table. When a meal was finished they reversed, by dragging the chair on its back legs from the table to the wall. It is

quite natural to expect, after so much dragging backwards and forwards, that the legs would get worn on their edges ; you will find, as a rule, that these chairs are heavy, and that in many instances the makers of them generally pierced and carved the top rail so that they might be the more easily dragged backwards and forwards.

One type of so-called collector always annoys me. He is what I term " the spoon-fed acquirer." He walks into a well-known shop, say in Bond Street, and examines very knowingly an Elizabethan tazza as being possibly the rarest thing the dealer has in his establishment. He asks the price, which is, of course, many hundreds of pounds, purchases it, and then boasts of his wonderful possession, always quoting the huge sum he paid for it, and the dealer's name and address. But when this type condescends to enter the more humble shrine of the beautiful, his manner is very different. You can tell at once that he has no real knowledge, and certainly no love, of the beautiful ; he hesitates and hums and haws before he will spend £5 on his own judgment. If, perchance, you have something very rare and beautiful, he will desire you to let him have it on approval, to see how it goes with his other things, in reality intending to show it to two or three experts ; and even then, supposing that he is told it is well worth the price and

should certainly be secured, he will come swaggering back and endeavour to secure it from the small man at a reduced price. I think you can visualise this type.

Look at the antithesis of this type. I have in mind a lady for whom I have the greatest respect. For many years she has suffered from ill-health and endured many operations ; but she is of the sunniest disposition, always cheerful, and her delight in collecting the best of beautiful things is a joy to behold. She springs from yeoman stock, and her family cherished all the furnishings of its forefathers. She has a sense of the beautiful in her mind, and responds at once to anything which expresses the genius of a true craftsman. She never makes a mistake, and yet is quite humble in speaking of her collection, and always anxious to learn more about the furniture, china, and glass of fine periods. It is one of my great pleasures to take tea at times with this brave lady, and to dilate on, and enthuse about, beautiful things. Her cheerful smile helps me so much when I feel depressed or out of sorts. Her knowledge and her love of the beautiful is always an inspiration to me.

Again, there comes into my mind a family who love beautiful things. It is only recently that I have had the great pleasure to know them, but the real delight of the collector in the head of this charming household, has radiated more joy

to me than anything else in all the twenty-one years I have been a dealer. Thus, even at the going down of the sun, we may meet a companion of the way who brings back to us all and more of the joyous dawn. How happy I was when the head of this house said to me one day, "I have always been grateful for existence ; but you have heightened my gratitude, just as you have widened my knowledge and deepened my love for craftsmanship." One day, so we dream, he and I are to make a tour of England in quest of the true, the beautiful, and the good.

This family lives just across the bay, and as often as possible in summer, I go across the sea by steamer and spend the day with my friends. Their house is called Garden Court, but in my mind it is noted down as *Heavenly Court*—so united is that family, so unstudied and natural are all their ways, and so loving their kind hearts.

In that house I met Mr. Herbert Weld of Lulworth, and so made acquaintance with the wonderful things in his castle, some of which, broken and laid aside in lumber rooms, I have restored to their earliest condition. What a bond of union it is, this love of the beautiful, and how it enriches human friendship.

CHAPTER VI

MEMORIES OF A DARK HOUR

INCIDENTS that happened to me during the Great War, and my impressions as a dealer of that dreadful time, may be of some interest to my readers.

I remember on the Monday after the declaration of war, that I went to my establishment with the feeling that the bottom was knocked out of everything. I had cabinet makers in my workshops repairing and restoring antique furniture, (of restoring antique furniture I will write anon) and I knew full well, so far as my business was concerned, that I might as well put up the shutters. Then again I felt that these men and apprentices were dependent on me, so that it behoved me to put a good face on everything and carry on to the best of my ability as long as possible.

Such were my mixed feelings on that woeful day, and in such a depressed state of mind I entered my establishment. With what hope and relief did I see a lady entering my doomed premises a few hours after my arrival. But that visit warned me of what was to come.

This lady had motored in from the north of Hampshire to secure some utility pieces of antique furniture, not of great value, to furnish a lesser house of hers, because she intended lending her mansion for a hospital or convalescent home, whichever might be required. Thus I had an order of £300 or £400 on the first day of war, which would enable me to keep on my men for the time being, but how ominous was that order ! For weeks and weeks afterwards a dreadful silence settled on my little shop. The door seldom opened. Nobody paused to look in at my window. Who could think of beautiful craftsmanship when the roof of the world was falling in, and hell itself seemed to have broken loose ?

Soldiers poured into the town, tarried for a moment, and then away to the docks, singing and shouting as if they were going to a football match. My youngest son who was on his holiday in Wales, rushed home and enlisted in the Public School Battalion of the 18th Royal Fusiliers. When I told my men that he had joined up they all left to do likewise, with the exception of one man who was delicate, and an apprentice. I felt at that time like a house from which the foundation had been dragged. It seemed to me that everything around me and over me was tottering. The silence of my shop had something weird, uncanny, and menacing about it.

The whole race of humanity had rushed off to another world and left me behind them, as a thing useless and of no account. Beautiful things ; had they any reality ? Furniture, glass, china ; what were their value now ? Relativity smote me on the face. All my knowledge ; what was it worth ? All my love for craftsmanship ; what did it signify ? The guns were speaking, and above their clangour no small, still voice was to be heard.

But, shaken as I was, and depressed, and anxious, and sometimes unbearably tortured, reason told me that hate is an incident, that war is a madness, and that love and beauty are eternal. I waited, even though my heart was often in my mouth, for the human race to recover its reason. In my little shop, surrounded by lovely things for which nobody seemed to care, I waited for a return of mankind to my forsaken door.

In 1915 people came to my door. They were chiefly old people ; elderly collectors who turned once again to their hobbies as a distraction from the horrors of war. They had sons or grandsons fighting, and to keep their minds occupied, they continued their collecting, although in a lesser degree, and rather sadly, almost as if they doubted its value. I began to have enquiries for certain antiques ; one of my especially good clients, who had gone in for collecting old English drinking

glasses and old Irish glass at my suggestion, asked me to call upon him in London. He desired me to add to his collection extensively. I could not understand his enthusiasm until I learned that he had an only son fighting in the East.

This was, comparatively, a happy time for me ; it kept me fully occupied in travelling about. I went to Ireland three or four times, and I was able to make for this gentleman one of the best collections of English and Irish glass in England. One of the representatives of the South Kensington Museum inspected it, and confessed that he saw glass in that collection which he had never seen before, in fact never knew was in existence. After making the collection, the owner wished me to catalogue it, which I did, and my gratitude to this good collector I shall never be able to express sufficiently, because he kept my thoughts on work. But for him I should have been compelled to spend my time in my lonely and desolate establishment, on which I was beginning to look with horror.

Two of my men had been killed ; one of them I had had as an apprentice ; poor lad, he was only just out of his time, and so proud to help his mother ; it was a great shock to me when I heard of his death. His mother came to see me, and, with tears in her eyes, she said she prayed to God to spare Master Willie and Master Bobbie

(my boys) from the fate of her son. My eldest son Willie had come home from Buenos Aires, thrown up his position there to come back to his country to fight; one can imagine how glad I was to be away from the place; it seemed full of shocks and horrors.

I remember Mr. Vachell bringing his only son to see me. The boy was in uniform; the father seemed so proud of him. Within a fortnight this manly, fine fellow was gone. His hand-clasp seemed quite fresh in my hand, and the brightness of his eyes was still before me.

No, I preferred to be in London, even with the air raids, and I was there in four of those raids. I remember the first Zeppelin raid, and distinctly saw the great German airship as it travelled across the West End of London going eastward.

My good client, after I had finished his catalogue, obtained for me the valuation of the contents of the town house and country house of Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan. I could write a book on the wonders in those two houses. The pictures in the town house are, of course, well known in the art world. Dutch pictures by Franz Hals, Hobbema, and de Keyser, etc. French pictures by Greuze, Pater, Largilliere, Nattier, and a fine landscape by Troyon. English pictures by Gainsborough, Constable, and Landseer, etc. Then the porcelain, Oriental, Continental, and English, all of the finest. The largest Chelsea

group I ever saw is in this collection. The furniture in the town house was mostly modern French reproduction. In the country house there were very many pictures and drawings from Holbein, Van Dyck, and others of our best artists ; but the most pleasing picture to me was a large pastel drawing, by Russell, of children. I am afraid I wasted a good deal of time in front of this wonderful picture, the charm of the children, and the wonderful colouring, were superb. Here in this country house were some very fine pieces of Chippendale furniture, chiefly a library table, and a pair of large arm-chairs of the " Venetian taste." I am especially fond of old needlework, and here I had a feast indeed. There were dozens of pieces, no doubt collected by the late Mr. Pierpont Morgan in Italy, going back to the tenth century—vestments, copes, table covers—priceless gems. The four months I was doing this work passed like a dream, and all the time the guns were thundering, and my two boys in the midst of the storm.

Here is an incident of my sojourn in London during the war. One morning, at breakfast at the hotel, I was asked to go to the telephone ; a lady wished to speak to me. I went, and a voice asked if I was Mr. Rudd, the glass expert. I said I was. Then she asked me if I would do her the favour of going round to her house in Albemarle Street, to see her collection of Irish

glass. I went. In a front room was displayed some thirty pieces of cut glass, confitures, urns, etc. I noticed the cuttings of all these pieces were very similar, and could see at a glance that none of it was Irish glass. What a predicament ! She was so anxious for praise, but truth had to be told. I asked her if she had collected these pieces herself. She said yes. Then I said to her, " I will tell you how you have managed to collect all this foreign reproduction. You bought one piece, no doubt, on the assurance of a dealer that it was Waterford glass, and when you came across any other pieces at other establishments, you purchased them ; in this way, misled by a dishonest dealer, you have collected, from the antique collector's point of view, a lot of rubbish." The poor lady was bewildered and upset. The collection had cost her about £200, and a lot of the glass was German and Dutch. If the dishonest dealer could have seen the pain in her face, he might have felt a twinge of his conscience.

During my stay in London I met a number of the London dealers, and visited their establishments ; looking at their goods and the prices asked, I came to the conclusion that fine pieces, whether furniture, china, or glass, were priced and valued rather extravagantly, in comparison, at all events with the provinces. No doubt a great deal of this was accounted for by the high rents these men have to pay ; but for ordinary

antiques, things of a mediocre character, London is cheaper than the country. It behoves the collector, if he has good judgment and knowledge, to get into the provinces, for there are many reputable dealers in the country, and their knowledge of fine pieces of antique is as good as the London dealer, and they are able to sell at prices considerably lower. The *Connoisseur* magazine, an excellent medium for the collector, gives the advertisements and addresses of the provincial as well as the London dealers. Let the collector continually improve his knowledge, educate his judgment, and learn to depend upon himself.

But let us turn away from the war, and get back more thoroughly to that love of the beautiful which has survived Armageddon, and will outlive every futile effort of man to bestialise this lovely planet and this sweet experience of human life.

It may be appropriate at this point to say a few words about collecting, its origin, its development, and its prospects. In my judgment the beginning of this passion was, in part at least, the love of a bargain.

Bargaining when purchasing antiques is quite the order of things, though it is not so prevalent as it was years ago. The habit of bargaining goes back to the dawn of history, but so far as antiques and this country are concerned it may be said to be about forty years old. At that

time, especially in the provinces, the dealer in antiques was next door to a marine store dealer, and sold all manner of ill-assorted things, some modern, some ancient, most of them of no great value, but with bits of antiques among them, obtained from the larger houses and rescued from the attics.

In the Early Victorian Era, when heavy inartistic furniture was the vogue, this kind of dealer obtained, for a mere song, from the back door of country houses, beautiful bits of the eighteenth century, in fact in many instances he gave cheap jewellery in exchange for a chair or table or anything that was considered of no value by the servants. The dealer knew his purchases were old, but whether they were made by Chippendale or Richard Doe he had no more idea than the man in the moon. The market in those days was made by a few collectors with true artistic temperament.

The dealer, for example, would ask three pounds or four pounds for an article which had cost him, let us say, ten shillings or less; the collector, guessing what the dealer had paid, would then bargain, and probably, in the end, would buy at thirty shillings. The dealer always asked more than he expected to get, especially if his customer looked like a person of quality, as much to cover his ignorance of the true value of old things as in the hope of making a fortune.

In those days Sheraton sideboards would sell for twenty-five shillings, finely carved Chippendale chairs for a pound apiece—and a pound for a chair was considered quite a good price. Towards the end of the Victorian Era, when the æsthetic revival had done its work, and a part of the nation had become art-conscious, the owners of the great houses began to rescue from the attics the furniture and furnishings of their eighteenth century ancestors, and those pieces which a few years before had been taken out of the back door, began more and more regularly to return with honour by the front door. Thus knowledge increased and prices rose.

When I was a young man I visited an uncle of mine in Galway, who was Inspector for the Local Government Board, and quite a pasha in his way. It was his habit at ten o'clock every morning to go to his front door and bargain with the women who sold their produce, lobsters, chickens, eggs, etc. I remarked to him once that he knocked the egg woman down to a very low figure. He replied laughingly, "Two thirds of the eggs that I purchase are practically given to these women at my own back door, and come from my own hen roosts." Thus it was with the furniture of the seventeenth and eighteenth century; it had been given away at the back doors of country houses, and now, after hard bargaining, began to return to its original owners.

Books began to be written on the subject, and then America took a hand in acquiring our beautiful things. Soon there was quite a rage, and prices soared. I predict that within a century it will be difficult to find a genuine piece of furniture of the sixteenth, seventeenth, or eighteenth centuries in any private houses except those of the very rich.

I remember as a young man lodging in Kennington, and finding on the dressing table in my bedroom a beautiful walnut Queen Anne toilet mirror. It had three tiers with small drawers, all shaped, and the mirror above had a shaped frame, standing in all just under three feet. I believe my landlady picked it up in an adjoining house at an auction for eight shillings. It would be worth £30 to-day. Kennington was the home of the merchant princes in the eighteenth century, and there must have been some fine furniture taken from these houses which are to-day let out in lodgings and tenements, most of them dropping more and more into a condition of seediness and decay.

At this point let us turn to the joy of hunting for pretty things, what I will call the quest of minor rarities.

CHAPTER VII

THE QUEST OF MINOR RARITIES

LET us begin with those charming little creations of our ancestors, porcelain and pottery cottages. These mimic dwellings, these little homesteads of the mantelpiece, were, as a rule, most beautifully designed and modelled. The gabled roof, the little bow windows, and the friendly door, the whole encrusted with tiny flowers of various colourings, gave them an endearing appearance of reality in duodecimo. Occasionally ambition soared above these fairy houses and modelled castles of various colours—mauve and gilt being the favourite type; sometimes ambition contented itself with something betwixt and between, and a country mansion was the result, with clustering chimneys and mullioned windows. All these creations, ranging from ten to eighteen inches in length, had a purpose hardly to be guessed from their pretty playfulness; they were made for pastille burners. Some stood on bases which could be lifted on and off, others had a small orifice at the back through which the pastille could be placed, the smoke of its invisible conflagration coming through the chimney. One

can quite understand how useful they were in days when the now adolescent science of hygiene was in its most unpleasant infancy.

The Rockingham factory turned out most of these cottages, though a good many were made at Coalport. Chamberlain at Worcester created some very fine models. They are very scarce to-day, whereas fifteen years ago they were fairly plentiful and could be picked up—the smaller types at least—well under a sovereign, though I have known even in the old days the finer and larger types to fetch £10 and more. They are scarce because there came to be a feeling for these little things among some very keen collectors, and soon many people of taste woke up to their beauty, and then there was quite a hunt for the many varieties which were hidden away in different parts of the country. I know of one collector who has over 600 of these cottages.

Battersea enamel is another rarity to-day. Patch boxes, little boxes in enamel decorated in some instances with mottoes and love verses, furnished in the inside of the lid with a tiny mirror in glass or polished steel, were once common enough but now have been hunted into private collections. Enamel snuff boxes with pictures by noted artists of the early eighteenth century, Watteau subjects, landscapes, portraits, are also favourite specimens of Battersea and are

hard to find. I had one of Bonnie Prince Charlie, the Pretender, in colour. Battersea enamel etuis, dainty cases which, when opened, revealed scissors and other useful things for the lady of the eighteenth century, are now chiefly to be found in collections. Those etuis were decorated with flowers, also with love mottoes, and evidently were presents from the gallant to his lady in the days of good Queen Anne.

Bilston enamel is sometimes mistaken for Battersea, but is coarser, and as a rule it is made up in larger boxes of twelve or fourteen inches long. Clock faces, erroneously called Battersea, were made of Bilston enamel, and were intended for grandfather clocks. I do not much care for this enamel, but it is worth keeping, perhaps, as a curiosity.

Samplers and needlework pictures, on the other hand, always give me pleasure. The sampler was worked by children, as a part of their lessons, and consisted of coarse linen suitable for a simple stitch. The work consisted mostly of the alphabet and numerals in various coloured silks, and many were dated. The probabilities are that these samplers took a whole twelvemonth to work, and were cherished not only by the worker, but by the parents of the worker. The earliest type were long and narrow, about six to eight inches wide and twenty-four inches long. These are exceptionally rare to-day. Later ones were

about eighteen inches square and included the alphabet, but generally finished up with a small verse, and the name of the worker, with the date. These latter can be picked up to-day and are interesting if only to show the patience of the younger generation in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Something domestic and simple about them, something that suggests the England of Jane Austen, will always preserve their sentimental value.

I discovered in a singular way the conception which underlies those very delightful creations, needlework pictures. I purchased some years ago at an old house near Newbury, a frame twenty-four inches by thirty inches, roughly carved and in silver gilt. In this frame were four dolls dressed as cavaliers and ladies of the period of Charles I. These figures, about nine to ten inches high, were tacked on to a background of some white material like brocade, and round the figures, as it were *en grisaille*, were flowers cut out of material and attached to the material in the same way as the figures. The frame was glazed with a piece of bottle-green glass, which had depressions in it of quite half an inch, just like hills and valleys. From this I felt sure that the stump work pictures, which were made at the time of Charles II., got their idea from the picture, if I can call it so, which I have just attempted to describe. The Stuart or stump

work picture—now a great rarity—consisted of figures built up, as it were, on the material, the faces made of kid and painted, the dresses worked with a fine stitch called *petit point*. These pictures evidently were made educationally, as one finds animals, fishes, and insects, representing natural history, figures of kings and queens, representing history, and narratives taken from the Bible, such as the fall of manna, judgment of King Solomon, representing divinity. The work, which consisted of various coloured silks, was most carefully done, and gives a charm to the numerous figures one finds in these ancient educational pictures. In the early eighteenth century, needlework pictures were supposed to be at their best artistically, and the flowers and figures of the period in *petit point* are indeed charming. In the latter part of the eighteenth century pictures in needlework were copied from the prints and pictures of Kaufmann, Morland, Bunbury, etc. The dresses and foliage were worked in silk lent stitch, and the faces were painted on satin.

In the nineteenth century these pictures began to be worked in wool. They are not so attractive as the silk ones, but one must be satisfied with these, for the earlier creations are hard to come by, and these woolwork pictures are fast on their way to become rarities.

Let me sound a note of warning here

concerning needlework pictures. Manufacturers have recently been turning out the late eighteenth century silk needlework picture by machinery, and putting them through a process which gives them an appearance of age; but they are easily detected by a trained eye, and should not deceive anyone who chooses to think of the beautiful colour which comes from time, and the sour colour which is all that fake can accomplish.

I might mention here that in the seventeenth century caskets of Stuart stump needlework were made. These caskets and cabinets, ranging from six inches to twenty-four inches in length, contained little drawers with secret compartments, revealed behind doors all most artistically worked, and many of them were dated. The subjects on these cabinets and caskets were identical with the pictures.

During the Napoleonic Wars from the end of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth century, a number of French prisoners were incarcerated mostly in the south, particularly in Southampton and Bristol. These prisoners, to beguile the time and to earn a little money, used to make boxes and small cabinets of soft wood, and cover these boxes with fine strips of straw which they coloured. The designs they worked in straw were beautifully executed and artistically pleasing. Ships and houses (the

former with their rigging) formed favourite subjects, and the minute work must have taken a considerable time, time that these unfortunate prisoners were only too glad to kill. The reader who comes across these rarities should certainly acquire them. They are worth keeping.

I collected at Bristol a Noah's Ark of this straw marquetry, with windows and doors all worked in straw; the animals were cut out of wood with a small knife, from an elephant to a grasshopper, and in the same fashion were Noah and his family created. These prisoners also made from pieces of bone full rigged men-o'-war. Both the straw marquetry boxes and the ships are becoming very scarce.

Glass paper weights, made at Nailsea and Stourbridge are becoming great favourites with collectors of minor rarities. These spherical specimens of solid glass domed at the top and flat at the bottom, filled as it were with tiny flowers of all sorts, and in many designs and colours, ranging in size from one inch or a half to four inches in diameter, are charming additions to a little table in the drawing-room. Some of them were dated always from 1845 to 1848. These paper weights twelve years ago could be picked up for a few shillings each; to-day they range from two pounds and more. Unfortunately more than half of them we now see are reproductions from Austria, and I think, on the

whole, that it would be well for the collector of the minor rarities, unless he is a very good judge, to leave them alone.

The strangest quest of the smaller rarities, I should imagine, is that of the falcon hoods. These are little hoods elaborately worked to cover the heads of the falcon when not seeking its prey. I know of one collector who, after many years of seeking, has got about twenty of these little hoods. They are certainly curious, rare, and sometimes pretty.

Then there are the reliquaries of King Charles I. After his execution the Royalists soaked handkerchiefs and linen in the blood of the King, and then cut these pieces of linen into minute particles, which were put into silver and gold receptacles ranging from the size of a sixpence to about a two-shilling piece. At the back were small miniatures of the King, or ciphers, or loyal mottoes. I only know of one good collection in this country of these Stuart reliquaries, and that is in the county of Hampshire. The quest of this rarity to-day, I should imagine, is hopeless. At any rate, it is not one on which a wise man will now set his affections.

The pleasure of obtaining a great rarity does not belong to the collector only, but to the dealer if he is imbued with the *flair* that constitutes the true lover of the antique. I have no patience with the man who says he has bought

an article, say, for £1, and requires a profit of 10s., that is a mere huckster; probably this individual, so far as pounds, shillings and pence are concerned, will do well, and from the mere money-making point of view he derives his pleasure. My idea of pleasure I will exemplify by one or two incidents that have happened to me.

Some years ago I was in Reading, and looking over a lot of rubbish in a second-hand shop I came across a little pottery figure of a musician playing a flute. He stood only about four or five inches high; the pottery was highly glazed in browns and yellows. I knew it at once as one of the early Astbury figures, even in those days a rarity. I bought it for a few shillings. My pleasure in getting hold of a rarity was great, but the idea of values did not enter into that pleasure, as the sequel will show; I was glad because I had found a very rare and beautiful thing. After enjoying the possession of this little flute-player for a little while, I offered him to a lady client of mine as a gift, because she had many rare and valuable pieces of early pottery, and this little figure in her possession would thus be housed with his equals in rarity. To-day my flute-player is worth in money £30 to £40. How quixotic and unbusiness-like of me to give him away! But not at all. This lady and her husband have been clients of mine for many years, and they have been very kind to me; why should I not give myself the

pleasure of giving them something rare and beautiful as a mark of my appreciation? If I were always bothering about money and profit I think I might lose my skill as a connoisseur; certainly I should lose half the pleasure of my life as a dealer.

Lunching one day in an old inn in Hampshire, I got into conversation with the landlord, and remarked that he had one or two nice pieces of old furniture. He said he knew little or nothing about them, but had taken them at a valuation when he bought the inn; he asked me if I would kindly tell him what I thought his various antiques were worth. I had an hour or two to dawdle away before catching my train, and I readily agreed to this suggestion, and went all over the place and was able to assure him that he had done very well in his purchase. He asked me what my fee was. I said I required nothing. He went to a cupboard and brought out a small white pottery flagon about eight inches high. In the centre of the flagon in blue lettering was the word Sack, and the date 1667. He asked me to accept this flagon for my trouble. I told him it was valuable. He said it was no value to him, as he found it in a cupboard and he did not care for it. Thus I went away rejoicing, the possessor of an old Lambeth pottery wine flagon. Here again I thought not of values, as I presented my possession to the late Mr.

Alfred Trapnell, with whom I had had many pleasurable deals, and who always received me with open arms when I chose to visit him. How delightful it was to give him pleasure and to make him feel that I had a true regard for him.

At Tenby I bought from a relation of my wife's some antiques which they wished to sell. Among them was a beautifully carved red amber Chinese mandarin brooch or clasp. I was showing this to a client of mine, a lady, a great collector of fine lacquer, and she said she never saw anything so beautiful. I asked her to honour me by accepting it, which after some demur, she did. The sequel of that little give-and-take was the arrival some time afterwards of a hind quarter of venison from my client's estate in Scotland—a white elephant to me, for I cannot bear venison. As quickly as I could I dispatched it in sections to various friends, glad to be rid of it, but not ungrateful for my client's kindly thought.

These incidents show that one can derive much pleasure even in business. I think there are few things in life so delightful to see as the real joy of the true collector when he acquires unexpectedly and as a gift something that he hungrily desires. If a dealer thought only of his money-bags he would lose that pleasure; and what a loss!

In my Southampton days I had periodical visits from Sir Donald and Lady Currie. One day

they brought Lord Wolseley. They had been yachting round the world together. Lord Wolseley and his wife were omnivorous collectors—if one can use that expression; they went in for everything at various times. Sir Donald Currie in those days was becoming very feeble; he could not get out of his carriage; but Lady Currie, who was a great collector of china and pottery animals—I used to save them for her—was almost as active as a girl. On this occasion I had collected quite a number of these little animals, and I can still see the joy in the dear old lady's face when she saw them all ranged out for her inspection. Just after I had sent my assistant to get a box to pack them in, I caught sight from the window of old Sir Donald frantically beckoning to me. I went out and shook his hand, thinking he only wanted to have a little chat with me. But he was on business intent. He asked me the price of a large Crown Derby mug that was in the window. When I told him, he said, "I'll have it. Be quick, bring it to me." I went in, got the mug, and gave it to him. He chuckled, as he bade me return quickly to the shop and attend to the others.

Lord Wolseley was then collecting pewter, and he was very pleased to acquire a flagon with a record showing that Captain Cook, the explorer, had been baptised from it; it had come from a church. When he and Lady Currie, very well

pleased with themselves, returned to the carriage, Sir Donald enquired about their purchases, asking if they had got any bargains—real bargains. After being told how successful they had been he triumphantly brought out the Derby mug, saying that he, sitting in the carriage all the time, had got the bargain of the establishment. They enquired the price. He replied “Seven and sixpence”; which was a fearful tarradiddle. The others appeared incredulous. Lord Wolseley said, “Show it to me.” He handled and examined it, and returning it to Sir Donald he said, “Mr. Rudd must be mad; I would have given him £5 for it.” Just as they were driving off, Sir Donald turned his head over his shoulder and said to me “Mr. Rudd, it’s perfectly true, isn’t it, that I gave you seven and sixpence for the mug—*and the rest?*” That was the last time I ever saw this dear old gentleman. He went out of my life with a smile and a little jest.

The incident I have just related seems to raise the question of values. What is a bargain? What is a fair price for a rarity? Sir Donald’s little jest, and his desire playfully to appear sharper than the others, sets one thinking in a serious line.

If an article is perfectly genuine, and a rarity, beautiful in quality, make, and otherwise, the value, surely, can only be determined by the

individual who wishes to enjoy its possession. The measure of his wish is the measure of the price. I have been to sales and seen without making a bid rare and beautiful things knocked down to rich men at prices far beyond my reach ; but if my purse had been as deep as that of the happy purchaser, I am sure he would have been forced to give considerably more for the object of his desire. Many a time I would have chased him into thousands of pounds.

It is a fallacy to say the dealer determines the value of anything. It is the collector who determines values, the rich collector with knowledge of the rare and beautiful. I have known many instances where a dealer has bought an article thinking he could sell it at a high profit, but has been forced to sell it at a loss because the rich collectors did not care about it.

Sometimes a visitor to my shop will ask the price of a rarity, and straightway exclaim, " Oh, how very dear ! " This always amuses me. What do they mean by their *very dear* ? I sometimes say, " Seek high and low for another article of this kind, and when you find it, if you do, inquire the price ; then and only then will you know if my price is *very dear* ! " They see the point, laugh at themselves, and become more friendly and trusting. A person can go to half a dozen jewellers in almost any town and buy diamond rings up to £300 or £400 ; but he could

have his pockets stuffed with banknotes and go in vain through nearly all the towns of England in search of a complete tea service in Dr. Wall square-marked Worcester in scale blue, decorated with panels of exotic birds.

CHAPTER VIII

INCIDENTS

THE most extraordinary occurrence that happened to me in my dealing days was in this way. One evening, as I sat writing letters in my office, I heard the bell go, and entering the shop discovered there three well-dressed young men. They asked if they could look round. I showed them all over my establishment. They were well-mannered, and seemed to me well educated young men, but by the questions they asked I soon saw that they had not the remotest idea about antiques of any kind. After looking about for some time, one of them asked me which I considered to be my most valuable piece of china. I showed him two eighteen inch *famille verte* Oriental plaques which I had just bought for £35. On my telling him this he took out a wallet, presumably to show me that he was a man of means, and said "I am a 'sport,' I'll toss you if I give you seventy pounds or nothing for the plaques." As he said this he took three coins from his pocket, and desired me to call once to his coin. By this time my suspicions were

aroused. I told him to put his money away, as I never gambled. They all tried to cajole me into tossing. I told them it was waste of time, and that I wanted to get on with my letters. They became challenging and rude. I grew impatient and stern. Finally they said I was no "sport," and went, with no very pleasant expressions on their faces. I telephoned to the police and described the gentlemen; I was told that no doubt they had come off one of the liners in the docks, and were card-sharpers. I wonder if such gentry acquire valuables from other dealers in this artful way?

The most eerie occurrence that ever happened to me fell out in this fashion. I was in the habit of buying small bric-à-brac from an old retired schoolmaster who had a fairly good knowledge of antiques. He would bring me one day a Battersea box, little Chelsea scent bottles—very rare these days—old seals, etc. One day he brought in a Chinese god about nine inches high. It was beautifully modelled in silver and the base was ragged, as if it had been torn off a stand of some kind. The silver was as thin as paper, and the interior of the figure was filled with a sort of bitumen. The old gentleman said that it had been looted from Peking, at the time of the Boxer riots. Be this as it may, I bought the figure for £4. This, I remember, was on a Thursday. I

placed the figure on the top of a cabinet. That day not a single client came to see me ; the next day, Friday, it was the same, not a single enquiry. Of course, one does not expect to sell antiques every hour, but certainly as a rule one gets someone in during the day to enquire about the price of some article in the window or to have a look round. Saturday in those days was a fairly busy morning ; clients used to motor in from the country ; on this particular Saturday not a soul came in. What had happened ? The loneliness began to get upon my nerves. I was walking about the shop, pondering on this inexplicable dearth of visitors, this sudden and unaccountable cessation of all business, when my eyes alighted on the silver god. I am not superstitious, but all of a sudden, with great force, the idea came to me that the Chinese god was bringing me bad luck.

Just about the luncheon hour, the old schoolmaster came in with a tortoiseshell and silver picquet snuff box, for which he wanted £2. I told him I would take the box if he would take back the god, as I did not care for it ; I said I was quite willing to lose a pound on it. He assented, saying he knew a collector who would willingly buy the god. On the following Monday morning, a dealer in the town who also had dealings with the old schoolmaster came in and said, " Have you heard the news ? Poor old Powell (the name of the schoolmaster) was found



*Fifteenth Century Dole Cupboard, found at Hounslow
from Beaulieu Abbey*

dead in bed on Sunday night." It gave me a shock, and I thought of the silver god. It was no doubt only a strange coincidence, but the death of the old schoolmaster haunted me for many days.

I was asked recently by Mr. H. A. Vachell what is the strangest incident that ever happened to me as a dealer. This set me thinking, and I got out a book of photographs shewing the rarest bits of old furniture I have collected since 1903, and went over them, pondering on the occasion and manner of their purchase.

One day I had been to see a lady in Hounslow about purchasing some scale blue Worcester, and on my way to Totton Station an old man stopped me and said, "Aren't you the man that collects 'old truck' at Southampton?" I said I collected old-fashioned things, and he invited me to go along with him. He took me to his house, at the back of which there was a loft. He took me up the steps of this loft, and there in the corner was a Dole cupboard—a wonderful thing. He said, "There you are. That has been there since my father's time, and I am over 70, so it must be old." I said it undoubtedly was old, and after settling the price he took it to my place at Southampton in his cart.

I placed it in the window, and on a card I gave a full description of such furniture, mentioning

the approximate period of the cupboard. It had been in the window for some days, when a man walked in with the air of one who could buy the earth. In an arrogant tone, he said, "How much is that cupboard in the window?" I said, "It is not for sale, only for exhibition." He retorted, "Is not this a store, or gallery, where you sell antiques?" I said, "That is so." "Then why not sell the cupboard?" he demanded. I again said, "It is for exhibition only." With this he got very angry, and exploded, "I am in a position to spend thousands with you," fuming and expostulating till at last in a regular rage he walked out of the place.

I left the cupboard in the window for about a month, and then put it away. Some weeks elapsed, when a very favourite client of mine walked in with another man, and said "Mr. Rudd, allow me to introduce to you Mr. F. He is a collector of early oak." The individual told me he was a member of the F.S.A., and had written papers on old abbeys and the oak therefrom, etc. I felt that here was an enthusiastic amateur and showed him my Dole cupboard. He looked at it for a long time, and with a sigh said, "I am sure it is too much for my pocket." I said I did not think so, and told him that as he was a friend of my client I would let him have it for £12. At the same time I related the tale of the arrogant would-be buyer, which seemed only



Fifteenth Century Livery Cupboard- Romsey Abbey 1400-1450

to amuse him. The sequel suggests that it had another effect on his mind. He bought the cupboard.

Some six weeks or two months afterwards, a gentleman walked in and asked if I had any early oak, as he was collecting for his nephew, the Marquis of G. I said I had nothing just then, but had sold recently to an ardent collector a rather wonderful Dole cupboard, showing him a photograph of it. He smiled on looking at this picture, and I asked him what was amusing him. He said that he had bought this very Dole cupboard at Christie's for ninety guineas. I asked him if he knew the vendor. He said yes, it was a Mr. F., moreover he had discovered that it was bought at Southampton.

Some months afterwards, the Marquis of G. came down to see me, and commiserated with me on having been taken in. I told him I was hardly taken in, but if I ever found a similar cupboard, somebody would have to pay for it. "I don't suppose you will ever get another," he said. But I did, and in less than six months. I bought it from a local dealer who had discovered it at the back of a pig-stye in Romsey. I sold it to the Marquis of G., and this time I did not give it away.

One day I received a telegram from a Rapper saying that he had a lacquer cabinet and settee for me at Exeter. I went there and purchased

these two pieces from him. It being too late to return home that night, I put up at one of the hotels, and before having dinner had a walk round. I went into a tobacconist's for some cigarettes. He had a drawing in his shop of Sir Walter Raleigh smoking a pipe ; I happened to remark that it was a very modern pipe which the artist had given him. The man, who was sharper than I had thought, looked at me intently and said, " Evidently you know about old things." I said, " Yes, I deal in antiques." He then told me of an old lady of his acquaintance who had a piece of furniture which she called her " Queen Bess cabinet," and considered it very valuable. I made an appointment with him for the morning to go and see it. How strangely we sometimes hear of things !

The tobacconist took me to a very small trim house, and a little old lady with white ringlets, very demure and sweet-looking, opened the door to us. She ushered me into a small sitting-room, and there in the corner was this cabinet. I asked her if she knew anything of its history. All she knew was that it had belonged to her late husband's father, who had been a lawyer, and that she had known this cabinet all her life as " Queen Bess's cabinet." Her only reason, she said, for parting with it, was that she had no relatives who would care for such a thing, but she wanted it to have a good home. She was



Queen Bess Cabinet—open

insistent on that, in her quiet demure way. I promised her that the cabinet should have an excellent home, and as it is now housed in one of the old stately mansions of Hampshire, I kept my word.

A short description of this cabinet is as follows : The whole of it is in cedar. On the fall in scratch carving is the monogram E.R. and the Tudor coat-of-arms. On opening the fall, a number of drawers are revealed, the bottom left-hand drawer with scratch carving and the date 1590 ; on the right-hand side are initials ; in the centre is a cupboard ; on the door is marquetry depicting a house, presumably Nonsuch Palace, the favourite residence of Queen Elizabeth's father, Henry VIII.

One has to consider how this writing cabinet found its way to Exeter. I imagine that when Queen Elizabeth visited Plymouth she took it with her, and either left it at Exeter on her way there or on her return to London. On each side of the cabinet are wrought-iron handles, which were used no doubt to place it on a table or to carry it about. As far as my recollection goes, the size of it was 3ft. wide, about 3ft. 6ins. high, and 2ft. 6ins. deep.

A photograph of an eighteenth century secretaire brings back to my mind a most interesting journey in my search for antiques. One day a Rapper came in to see me and said he had

discovered some fine things in an out-of-the-way village in Oxfordshire, but, as he put it, "You will have to pad the hoof, guv'nor." I am talking of days before the motor-car. It was certainly a long walk, over six miles from a railway station, but the village itself was well worth the journey. It was situated in a hollow, and consisted of about twenty houses clustered round a quaint old church, and embowered in trees.

The first house I visited had been, I should imagine, the squire's house, built about the time of Queen Anne. I was received by a lady in a room which was scrupulously clean and neat, but the carpet of which was worn to no pattern, while the whole appearance of the apartment suggested poverty fighting for self-respect. Perhaps it was because of this threadbare appearance of the room that certain pieces of furniture stood out in its midst like fine pictures. A beautiful Queen Anne walnut bureau bookcase, faded by age to a straw colour and inlaid with panels of sea-weed marquetry, made an instant appeal to the eye. Later one looked with reverence on four Queen Anne chairs in walnut, also faded to the beautiful straw colour that only age can give this furniture. The owner of these things, not more than thirty years old I should say, looked careworn and faded. She told me that she was willing to sell these pieces, but could not do so just then. The reason for this decision was not a mystery, as in



Queen Bess Cabinet—shut

another case I have already related, but was a tragedy. The faded lady in that threadbare room told me quite quietly that her brother was lying in another room on his deathbed, and that until he died she would not part with any of her furniture. She took my address, and said she would write to me when she wanted to sell. I waited nearly two years before I heard from her, and during that time, as she told me when I called again, the Rapper had taken no fewer than ten dealers from all parts of England to see her pieces, and to persuade her to sell.

In another house in that beautiful village I found a charming secretaire. This was a beautiful old-world cottage, simply a flower garland, inhabited by a maiden lady, the daughter of one of the old vicars of the village, who told me her only desire was to finish her days in the village of her childhood, so that she could rest with her parents in the churchyard. She was very loath to part with the secretaire, but she wanted to help an old friend who was in great distress. She only had a small annuity on which to live, and could not afford to give anything out of such narrow means to her suffering old friend. In this way she had decided, very reluctantly, to part with her secretaire. Her little tales relating to this piece of furniture were very pathetic. She pointed out the drawers in which her father kept sixpences with which to reward the village

children if they had been good in going to church. One of the panes of glass was missing. The old vicar broke it one day in taking out a book and there were no means in the village of getting a new glass put in. The amount of money she wanted to help her friend was about £10 more than the sum at which I appraised the secretaire, but I thought on such an occasion, and after hearing such tales, that one should stretch a point, and I gave her the sum required. This reconciled her to the loss of her piece of furniture, and no doubt she was consoled by the gratitude of her friend for whom she had made the sacrifice.

At one time in my early dealings I went in rather extensively for English pottery, especially Staffordshire figures. Among my clients was a Mr. E., from Hull. One day he came to look over my collection, and found there three figures which he wanted. It was a matter of £20 or so. He said, "I know where there is a set of fine Chippendale chairs," and produced from his pocket a small snapshot of one chair. I saw at once, if they were genuine, that they were something out of the common. He told me there were eight of them, six single and two carving chairs. The stipulation he made was, that if he gave me the address and I bought them, I was to let him have the figures he desired for £10; to this I agreed. I wrote that night to the owner, and in two days I had a letter in answer to say that I

could see the chairs, but that the price was £200. I am writing now of 1905 or 1906, I forget the exact year, but £200 was a big price in those days and chairs had to be something out of the common to fetch such a sum ; anyhow I drew the money in gold and notes and started next day for the north.

I arrived at Hull about six o'clock on a cold November evening and hurriedly took a room at the Station Hotel, as I had to go at once to Brough. At Brough I went to the adjoining inn and asked for a conveyance to take me to a village about eight miles away. The conveyance, which I found waiting for me, was a very neat brougham that would seat two. I told the inn-keeper I wanted a big cart as I should probably be buying some chairs and wished to bring them away with me. He found a large square cart for me, and after a wearying and jogging drive, I came to my destination, a rambling farm-house. It was then about eight o'clock and very dark.

I knocked at the door, and after waiting for some time a chain was removed, the door opened grudgingly, and an old man of nearly eighty, with a brass candlestick and lighted candle in his hand, appeared in the doorway and asked my business. I said I was Mr. Rudd from Southampton, and had come to see his chairs. He asked me into a sitting-room of fairly good dimensions, and there, right round the room,

filling all the wall space, were the eight Chippendale chairs. I emphasise this because of the size of the chairs. The average width of a Chippendale is generally about 2ft., but these were 2ft. 3ins. to 2ft. 4ins.

I carefully examined the chairs by candle-light, and saw they were perfectly genuine and in original condition. The Trafalgar seats had been covered with American cloth, but underneath I saw was the old material and hair. Then I started to bargain. I asked him the lowest price. He said, "Two hundred pun," and then bawled out, "George!" calling for somebody. A man came in, about forty or fifty years of age, and the old man said to him, "Tell the gentleman how many people have been trying to buy these chairs." The son (as it turned out to be) said "Hundreds. All the dealers of Yorkshire, and all the gentry round." They had started at about £20 years before, he told me, and the last price that had been offered was £125, but his father said he wanted "two hundred pun," and that was final. I saw there was no chance of getting something knocked off, but made one more attempt. I said that I had been put to a deal of expense already, and should have further expense in taking the chairs south—would he not allow me something off for them? The old man looked at his son, and after a pause he said he would "give me five pun back." I saw

there was no chance of getting any more off, and as time was slipping away, I said I would have them.

I asked for a bowl to count the money into. The son brought from the kitchen a large white pudding basin. I counted out the two hundred pounds in gold and notes; then the old man counted them, and then the son counted them. The old man took five sovereigns from the bowl and handed them to me. I noticed the son watching the old man. After the five pounds had been handed to me the old man made a movement to take the bowl. At the same moment the son made a clutch for it, and although this happened some eighteen or nineteen years ago, I can see the two men glaring at each other. The old man said, "It is my money," and the son retorted, "I have worked and kept you; it is mine." I stood dumbfounded for a moment. What a scene that was! At last I went across the passage to the kitchen, and saw an old woman and a younger son there. I said to them, "You had better come to your menfolk, else there will be murder." They rushed into the sitting-room, where the two men were still glaring at each other, with the one candle shining on their faces, anger in their eyes, fury in their voices. It was a weird sight. Eventually I persuaded the men to hand the bowl to mother, and settle their differences after I had gone.

We took the chairs in the yard, and made straw bands and packed them round each chair ; then it was a question of how to get them into the cart, because of the room they took. Eventually I had to stand in the middle of the cart and the chairs were piled round me. Thus I had to stand for eight miles, balancing, as it were, these chairs the whole way, while the driver sat on the shaft. I cannot express my thankfulness when I saw the lights of Brough station. I placed the chairs in the ticket office, and gave instructions to have them waiting on the platform the next morning to meet my train from Hull going south. I got back to the hotel at Hull about eleven that night. I think the waiter took me for a tramp ; I was dirty and grimy, and carried a piece of one of the chairs in my hand. I had supper and a bath, and went to bed tired out, but haunted by the sight of those two old men wrangling over the bowl of money. The next day I caught the 7.20 for the south, and got my chairs safely home.

I think they were in the window of my establishment about ten days when a gentleman came in and enquired the price. His face was familiar to me, and I asked if he was a Mr. B. He said yes. I had known him as a member of a firm of stockbrokers in London. He told me he had retired, and was living in Devonshire. He was then on his way to winter in South Africa. The chairs interested him because of the carved

fleur-de-lys in the back, as two fleur-de-lys were the crest of his family in Yorkshire. I told him they came from Yorkshire. He bought them, and I saw them housed in the spring in his beautiful house in Devonshire. The owner is since dead, but he left instructions in his will that they were to be kept as family heirlooms.

I forgot to mention that I asked the old man from whom I bought the chairs if he knew anything of their history. He said he remembered, when a boy of about six or seven, that his father brought them home in his big market cart, saying that he had bought them at the big house (Cave Castle) for five pounds for the eight.

It once took me over six years to secure some Chippendale chairs—two carving chairs with six single chairs, and a small two chairback settee, to match; a particularly nice type.

I was introduced to the owner, a widow lady with one son. She was in poor circumstances. As this furniture was nice, clean, and in original state, also rather a rare type of Chippendale chair, I offered her quite a good price for it, but she could not make up her mind to sell. Other things she was willing to part with, but not her furniture, although the price I offered must have been a strong temptation to one in such needy circumstances. Bits of old china I bought from time to time over a period of six years, but she would not part with the chairs.

I heard pretty constantly that dealers and Rappers were trying to get the chairs, but in vain.

One evening in the early months of 1914, a Rapper came to my house and said, "Guv'nor, give me so much money, and I can get those chairs at Poole for you." Knowing this individual was rather slippery, and as it was a fairly large amount, I told him I would send a friend with the money and meet him at the house. I got the chairs and settee safely, but I was greatly chagrined when I found out afterwards that the old lady was of opinion that he was my agent, as he had told her that he came from me, and she therefore thought that I was buying them direct and that she was keeping her word to sell them only to me. They cost me £25 more than if I had gone and bought them myself.

I think the most pathetic incident that ever happened in my collecting was when one day I was asked to go to a certain house locally to buy two Chippendale chairs. It was in a very mean street. I knocked at the door, and it was opened by a very tall and gaunt woman. I noticed she looked very distressed. There was no passage in this house ; one went straight into the living room from the street. To my discomfiture I saw a coffin in this room. The poor lady told me that her sister had just died, and that she wanted to sell the two chairs to pay for



Chippendale Chair—Poole

her funeral; those chairs, she said, were the last of their treasures.

They were very good carved back single chairs, and I bought them. She then asked me if I knew anything of miniatures, and if I bought them, adding that she had one to sell. I said I knew a good miniature, and if hers was a good one I could find a customer for it, and in the circumstances of her distress I would give her the whole of the proceeds. She showed me the miniature. It was her great-grandmother as a girl, in a gold frame. I sent it to a collector who was a good judge; he said it was by an Irish miniature painter, and sent me £55 for it, which I was very pleased to give to the poor lady in that back street of Southampton.

Dublin was once a happy hunting ground for me. One could go down to the quays most days and pick up something rare and beautiful. I am writing of the early days of this century. I found in time that the source of supply of antiques in Dublin was the Jews' quarter. There was a terrace of private houses, and in all these houses were stacked antique furniture, china, prints, and glass. These Polish Jews travelled all over Ireland selling cheap jewellery for the sole purpose of getting into houses and so obtaining any antiques that might be going. I am told that these men, in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, used to bring into Dublin

sacks of beautiful old Sheffield plate which had been bought for a mere song. The reason of this one can quite understand. Here in these old mansions and houses were families that in the eighteenth century had been wealthy—merchant princes, in fact. Trade had left Ireland, and these families had become quite poor. They had no retinue of servants to keep their fine old Sheffield plate and silver clean, so it was relegated to the pantries and became black with disuse. Thus, when these Jews came round to the back door, there may have been an old servant or so who thought it a wise thing to get rid of such things in exchange for useful shillings.

As to my own experiences, I think the most disappointing one I ever had was in Dublin. I went into a dealer's shop one day, and there put up against the wall was the most beautiful Adam mantelpiece I ever saw. I wish I had a photograph of it to show, but it can be seen in the Dublin Museum. I said to the dealer, known as "Snuffy" Hicks, a most dear and lovable old man, "What is the price of the mantelpiece?" He said, "Eighty pounds, but I can't sell it to you until twelve o'clock." I said, "What do you mean?" "Well, it is this way. The Museum curator has seen it and wants it, but has not the money to spare, but he is endeavouring to rake it up and I have given him until twelve o'clock to-day." This was at about 11.30, and

I waited to know the result, hoping that the curator would not come to time, but just on ten minutes to twelve he walked in and paid for it. I was unhappy for the rest of the day. My disappointment was not so much for myself, though I should have got a good profit on it, but for a client of whom I was fond, and who had been looking for years for a very fine Adam mantelpiece. Luckily he never saw it, otherwise his chagrin would no doubt have been worse than my own.

One of my fortunate finds was in Dublin, an Adam serpentine side-table, superbly carved. I was fortunate in this way, that the dealer who had got hold of it, like the owner, could not make it out. The dealer told me he bought it quite cheaply from a gentleman in the north of Ireland who had just come into a property. He turned it out because it was ugly, and he was right, it was very ugly.

For some unknown reason, underneath the top rail of the table had been built two deep drawers on each side with a shallow drawer in the centre. This had been done some fifty years ago, and had got faded and looked old. I saw in a moment what had happened, but I kept my knowledge to myself. I bought it from the dealer; had the drawers knocked away, and these left a most beautiful Adam table, I think the best I ever saw. It now adorns a Yorkshire mansion.

I could not stay for long periods in Ireland and so I often used to leave my son in Dublin. He was just out of his teens, and had acquired good judgment in knowing fine antique furniture and glass. Poor boy, he little thought in those days of the dreadful crucible of war he had to go through. Happy, lighthearted, and sympathetic, he was a general favourite, and people liked to deal with him. He was very lucky during his sojourn in Ireland; two pieces he found which I had never before seen or heard of. One was a fine oval Chippendale dining-table that opened to 7ft. 6ins. or 8ft., and stood on eight cabriole claw and ball legs with fine acanthus leaf carving on the shoulders, which ran down half of the leg. My son was quite sure it was good, but the price bothered him, £40, so he asked the owner if he would allow him to take off one of the legs. This was done, and the leg was sent to me. I wired to him to secure the table. It was not only a beautifully proportioned table, but the colour was nearly black, made of old Cuban mahogany, and hard as iron. The other rare piece he found was a finely carved Chippendale kneehole table.

In 1911 I went to the west of Ireland for a holiday, not with any idea of collecting, but, of course, you cannot help yourself in this matter if you have the right spirit. I was very fond of watching the salmon being caught with the rod



Chippendale Carved Knee-hole Table---Ireland

in the Corrib, and it was fine sport watching the fight of a splendid salmon, some up to forty pounds, fighting for its life.

One afternoon, after having spent some hours at the Corrib, I went back to the hotel in Galway and found that a cousin of my wife was having tea with her. After tea, my wife's cousin asked me to go to a certain friend's house to see their antiques. I tried to put her off, for I was very tired, but she persuaded me, and glad I was, as the sequel shows.

It was an old world house in Galway, and after looking at the various china and bric-à-brac downstairs, the owner asked me to go upstairs, and lo ! in the centre of a room was a fine, nay, a magnificent, tripod table. I had seen many tripod tables, some exceedingly good, but I never saw a more beautifully carved and better proportioned table ; to make it infinitely better, it was in its original state and of a lovely colour, very dark, made in old Cuban mahogany. It was difficult for me to approach my cousin's friend, but at last I told him it was a very valuable table, and I should like to buy it. I mentioned a price. He thought I was making fun of him and said I was mad to offer such a figure; it was, indeed, with the greatest difficulty that I obtained the table, simply for the reason that the owner thought I was robbing myself; it was only on my promising to allow him to pay

for a luncheon at my hotel the next day that he agreed to let me have it.

Now this very fine Chippendale table is in the hands of one of our greatest collectors of old English furniture, and has been quoted and shown in magazines and books, but I was very much amused in reading one of our latest books on English furniture, which quotes and shows a reproduction of this table, to see that the writer calls it "Irish" Chippendale. It is nothing of the sort. The history of the table is this: one of the Viceroys of Ireland was very fond of the west of Ireland for shooting and fishing, and kept up a shooting box there. This was in the first half of the nineteenth century. When he gave up his Viceroyalty he sold all his effects in Galway, and the owner's father purchased this table at the sale; it was well known that all his furniture had been brought from England. I suppose what really happened was that the present owner, showing the table to the writer of the book, told him that it came from Ireland, but anyone who knows anything about Irish Chippendale, that is, carved furniture contemporary with Chippendale but made in Ireland, knows that the carving is very shallow and coarse, with no depth or under cutting such as one gets in the fine pieces of London or town-made Chippendale furniture.

An amusing incident happened to me when

pottering around the city of Galway. I went into the one pawnshop there, and asked the proprietor if he had any old silver or curios ; he had nothing but a few very old rosaries and one or two gold Cladagh rings. These Cladagh rings were interesting ; just a plain band of gold with two hands clasping each other. They were made locally by, I believe, a gold and silversmith of the name of Joyce in the 18th century, and they were sold all over Ireland for engagement rings, but they have been copied of late years ; those with the old maker's mark, however, are rare ; anyhow, I was not collecting rings, and asked him if he knew anyone in the town who had any antiques or curios. " Oh," he said, " you had better call on Mick McQuade, the undertaker, he gets together a lot of funny old things." I found my way to the worthy Mick, who lived in a very small shop, with a few coffin plates in the window. On entering the shop I was dejected to see a broken chair or two of no value, but from an inner room came a fiery red-haired man with vitality enough to fill the whole dreary place with life and hope.

I asked him if he was Mr. McQuade. He said, " That's my name, your honour." I asked him if he had any antiques or curios for disposal. He said, " Come in here, your honour. I'll show you all I have." In the inner room was some more dilapidated furniture, and a coffin

on trestles. He took a screw-driver and drew four screws out of the coffin lid. In the interior of the coffin was a conglomeration of all sorts of things—broken silver spoons, boxes, and glasses of various description. After turning over all these things, I found a small silver cream jug, with the Irish silvermark, and one drinking glass of the 18th century, a typical Irish eau-de-vie glass with a long stem and a very small bowl. I bought these from him, and he at once screwed the lid on the coffin again and put away the screw-driver.

I said, "Mick, why do you keep your things in the coffin?" He said, "Your honour, if you had five gossoons running about your house, you had want to put your valuables away in the safest place, and this coffin is my safest place."

He then told me how he collected "funny things." When he was called in on the death of anyone, he looked round to see if there was anything "funny," and if he did, why, when it came to a settlement in paying for the coffin, he endeavoured to purchase the "funny" things he saw in the house, and in most cases, he said, he was able to purchase the article he wanted by knocking off a bit from his bill.

My general experience of collecting in Ireland is a happy one. Every person, from the private owner to the dealer, always received me most courteously, in fact, I should say, graciously.

I went to one old mansion in King's County to buy some glass and antique furniture. It was a beautiful place, surrounded by hundreds of acres. To give an idea of its extent and character ; in one part of the estate was the ruin of a castle built in King John's reign, and in another part the remains of a house built in the time of James I. or Charles I.

The owner of the estate received me with every hospitality, and would insist on me staying for three days, in fact, wanted me to stay a month, but I told him I was a business man and had to get back to work. One very interesting feature of that visit concerned the pictures. My host had quite a quantity of, presumably, old Dutch pictures, and he asked me my opinion of them. After examining them carefully, I came to the conclusion that they were copies. The frames were old, with the names of celebrated Dutch artists such as Hobbema, Ruysdael, Tenier, Van Hysum, etc., but all of them, I felt sure, were copies. After telling him this, he said that no doubt I was correct, because he had found documents belonging to his great-grandfather mentioning the disposal of pictures. What happened was that the original pictures were sold, subject to having copies made, and the old frames were left. Probably the servants were told the pictures were sent away to be cleaned, and no doubt they thought the copies that came

back were the original pictures cleaned. The Irish gentleman is particularly proud, and would not let his retainers know that he was in any way hard up.

I will now give a few of my experiences in glass collecting. Collecting old English drinking glasses has been a hobby of mine for over forty years, and in these, my autumnal days, I am just as keen in my love of old glass. If I wrote of all the glorious specimens which have gone through my hands, it would fill volumes. I remember the late Mr. Hartshorne, who wrote the standard book on English drinking glasses, still the very best comprehensive book on the subject, saying to me that if he had had the help of my experience and knowledge in collecting glass, and was then younger, he would have re-written his book. I took this as a great compliment.

When I first went to business in the City of London, in the financial world, which I thoroughly detested, I devoted my spare time to collecting old drinking glasses, so long as the price was not more than a shilling or one and sixpence at the most. Those same glasses would fetch to-day thirty to forty times that price.

When I left London through financial trouble and ill-health, this collection was sold, and though prices were very low then, compared with to-day, it helped me to meet my liabilities. Then I started as a dealer in antiques, and

made drinking glasses my speciality. But I was like a man crying in the wilderness. In those early days I begged my friend and client, Mr. Vachell, to buy glass, both drinking glasses and fine Waterford glass, but no — china and furniture were enough for him. He mentions in *Fellow Travellers* his regret at not taking my advice.

One day, in my establishment at Southampton, I noticed a young man taking glasses out of my cabinet and comparing them with one he had taken out of his pocket. I asked him what he was doing? He answered, "I am trying to find some glasses to match this one," showing me his own glass. I told him that if he looked all his life-time he would not find a glass among my collection to match his, for the simple reason that his was a wretched Swiss fake and absolutely worthless. He then said he wanted to collect old English drinking glasses, and would I help him? I said, With pleasure, and put together for him about a dozen of different types as the nucleus of a collection. He told me he was a London man and came down to see his people living in the New Forest from time to time. He used constantly to visit me and add to his collection.

Some two or three years elapsed, during which time drinking glasses steadily rose in value. One day I had a letter from an esteemed client and friend, now dead — he was a baronet and M.P. —

asking me if I would come to London to value a collection of glass he wished to purchase for his son. I went to London and he took me to some chambers in the central district, where I discovered the young man whom I had started, only some few years back, in collecting. I went through his glass, and from our conversation felt that some dealer had a lien on, or interest in, the collection. It was so. This young man had given an option on his collection to a dealer for six months. Therefore when I gave my valuation to my client, viz. £2,500 for the collection, I told him not on any account to mention my valuation, but to ask the owner to name his price. This he did, but the young man steadily refused to quote a price; he wanted an offer. After a correspondence covering three weeks, my client made the offer of £2,500. What happened? The owner went to the dealer and asked him if he should accept it. The dealer told him he would give an answer in two days. What he did was to cable to the Metropolitan Museum in New York saying that the great expert (meaning me) had put a value of £2,500 on this collection (which he had already been writing about) and asking would they give £3,500 for it. They answered they would give £3,300 for it, and thus this collection of drinking glasses, which cost its acquirer so little, was lost to this country. My greatest regret in losing it chiefly concerned

one piece—a large posset cup with two handles, decorated with trailed glass. On the one side was C.R., on the reverse side was the coat-of-arms of the Maitland family. It had a lid surmounted with a crown in trailed glass, the period of Charles II. In those days I valued it at £500 to £600.

Two notable collections I made of late years in English drinking glasses and Irish glass are the Leslie collection and the Duff collection. I was fortunate in getting a large valuable collection of Irish glass all at one time. It was in this way. Dudley Westropp, of the Dublin Museum, a good judge of old silver and Irish glass, who has written a fine book on Irish glass, wrote to me to say there was a fine collection of Irish glass for sale in Dublin, mentioning the man who had it. I had had various deals with this man, and knew him. It turned out that he had stocked a shop in Grafton Street with antiques, and had collected for some time Irish glass and placed it in this shop. After getting it together he wanted his son to manage the place, as he had a shop on the quays, but he could not get his son to take any interest in the Grafton Street shop, and in despair shut it up. I was able to buy the collection at a price that would have been absurd two years later.

There were many pieces, Waterford salad bowls of all descriptions, water jugs, pickle urns,

sucriers, salt cellars, four large barrels of glass. I had the greatest difficulty in getting it away, but cajoled and humoured and palm-oiled the officials until it was safely on the mail boat from Kingston. I brought it to London, and there it remains.

I bought some wonderful glass (not drinking glasses) in Ireland. Drinking glasses of the eighteenth century of Irish make are very scarce. They consisted mostly of eau-de-vie glasses with long stems and very small bowls, the bowls a little larger than a large thimble. The dealers in Dublin say I acquired the largest single piece Waterford salad bowl ever known of in Ireland ; it was twice the size of the ordinary salad bowls, and they are large. I mention single piece salad bowls, because there was one larger than mine, which is now in the Leslie collection, but this one was later, about 1800 to 1810, in two pieces, that is, the stand one piece of glass, and the boat-shaped bowl resting on the stand, another. That was acquired by the Marquis of Bute for the sum, I believe, of £750.

During the recent trouble in Ireland some inscribed glasses of the Volunteer movement of the eighteenth century came into the market—these were in institutions, I should imagine, and have been turned out and sold to the dealers, because, it was thought, they would be smashed. I acquired several of these, and they are now



Leinster "Toast" Glass and reverse side

housed in a noble captain's house in the Midlands, who has a great love of Ireland and its traditions.

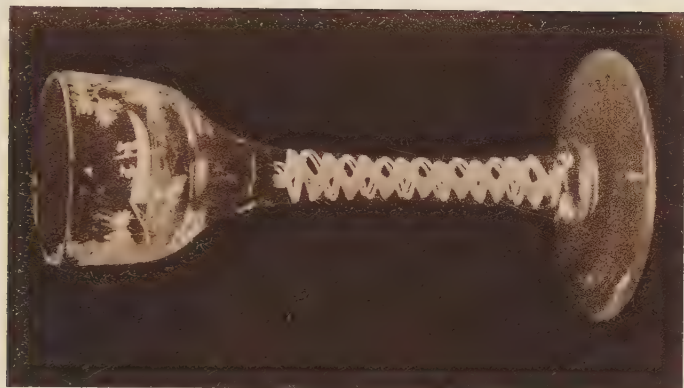
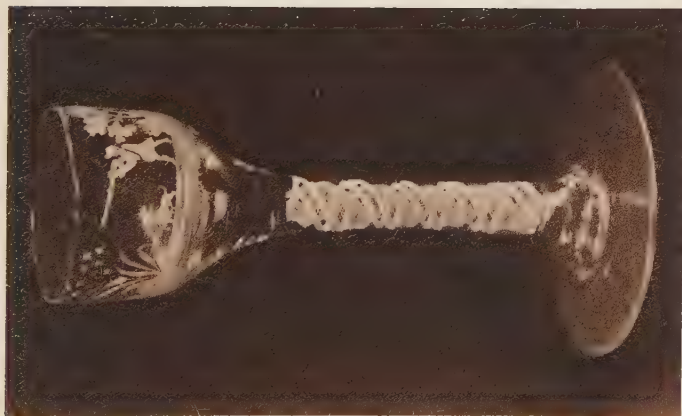
One of the rarest inscribed glasses I obtained from Ireland was called the Leinster toast glass. On the one side is engraved the portrait of the first Duke of Leinster as a General of the Dublin Volunteers. On the reverse side is the crest of the family, an ape, and the motto *crom a boo*. The Earls of Kildare took the ape as their crest, because the heir born in the thirteenth century was saved from a fire at the castle by an ape. The period of the glass is about 1750 to 1760. This glass is now in the collection of Colonel and Mrs. Dickson. These gentle-folks have been clients of mine for many years, and were luckily induced by me to purchase drinking glasses in my early days of dealing. They have got a most notable collection, especially of Irish drinking glasses, in my judgment the best of the type in the collecting world.

Take for instance two drinking glasses they acquired from me, cordial glasses most beautifully worked on the bowls in white glass enamel. One represents a shooting scene, the other boating and fishing. The figures are minute but perfectly artistic, undoubtedly by Edkins of Bristol. These two glasses have been greatly envied by all glass collectors, and in my experience I have never come across any others, although I have

had, without exaggeration, thousands of glasses through my hands.

Let me finish up my experiences in collecting by a story which shows how I was rather "had" and badly treated. I heard of a very fine Chipendale chair in a small town in Surrey. To get to my destination I had to change several times, and arrived there about luncheon time. I was rather tired and very hungry. I went to the small dealer's shop and found the chair, a rare specimen. After some bargaining I settled a price of £20, and told him I would go across to the hostelry and get something to eat, and then I would come back, pay him, and take away the chair. I went back to the shop a little after two o'clock. I did not notice the chair where I had left it, and thought it had been taken away to be packed. The man came in and blurted out that he was very sorry, but he had gone out after I had left, had not told his wife he had sold the chair, and another gentleman had come in and bought it from his wife. I was, of course, furious, but he said he did not know the purchaser, and as I had not paid for it—well there it was, he was sorry.

I had to go away discomfited. About three weeks later I had occasion to call on a dealer in the West End of London, and there was the chair. I asked the dealer the price; he told me £65. I then asked him where he got it from, and he



Cordial Glasses worked in white glass enamel by Edkin

told me that a certain man had sold it to him for £45. I knew this individual, and went to see him. He told me the facts—that he had bought it from the man I had called on for £30 (the man telling him that I had offered £25, which was a lie) and he, knowing I was a fairly good judge, thought it good enough to give £30 for it, and he took it away with him.

The moral of this story is, pay on the nail for anything you fancy, in antiques especially, and get a receipt. I was never “had” a second time in this fashion.

CHAPTER IX

THE OLD AND THE BEAUTIFUL

THE other day I was shown a photograph of three naval officers ; it represented three generations ; in the centre was a distinguished old admiral over ninety years of age, seated in a chair ; on his right hand stood his son, also an admiral ; and on his left hand stood the son of this son, a young lieutenant. The old admiral was blazing with medals and orders ; the younger admiral also wore a number of decorations ; on the breast of the lieutenant was a single medal.

I noticed that while the young lieutenant was upright and aggressive, as if he wanted to fight the whole world, and that while the younger admiral was stern and strong, as if he was conscious of grave responsibilities, the old admiral, seated in the chair, expressed nothing but gentleness and sweetness. I examined the photograph more closely. The lieutenant's face was perfectly smooth, not a line showing anywhere ; the younger admiral's face was nearly as smooth, with only an expression of great firmness to denote middle-age ; but the old admiral's face was not merely full of lines, but the firmness was relaxed,

and the entire countenance was entirely free from anything in the nature of rigidity.

Then said I to myself, "Such is the compensation of old age. The strain of life is over. The spirit is delivered from its cares. A gentleness of soul looks out of old eyes, smiles on the fuss and fever of middle-age, smiles on the self-importance of youth, and has nothing for all mankind but a blessing. Old age is more beautiful than manhood and youth. Even an infant in its mother's arms lacks the exquisite tenderness and benignity which shines in the face of this dear old admiral."

Something of this beauty exists in old furniture, and differentiates it from the cleverest imitation of the antique. The mellowing influence of time is a thing which we can feel in our bones, but cannot express in words, certainly cannot define. I remember hearing of a dispute between architects on the merits of certain ancient buildings which ended in the agreement of all of them that three-fourths of the wonderful beauty of those buildings was the invisible and indefinable work of time. Perhaps it is the same with furniture. Stand an imitation Queen Anne writing-table beside a genuine Queen Anne writing-table, and though they may both look the same at the first glance, you will presently discern that the one smells of Tottenham Court Road, and the other of a hundred and more English

summers. In the one you will be conscious of cleverness; in the other of beauty. "Grow old along with me," cries Browning, "the best is yet to be." Beauty is the best, and beauty is the crown of old age.

Look at a modern picture, the best modern picture you can discover, and then compare it in your mind with the work of an old master. Is there not something second rate, or something less rich, less pleasing, less satisfying, less lasting, in the modern work? Yes, because it is young, because time has not yet got to work upon it; and, if you think about it, you will come to the conclusion that why so many modern pictures fail to please us deeply, is because their quality is not of a lasting kind, is not of that nature which time can mellow; they are like those dreadful machine-made tiles on modern villas which defy the effect of sun, rain, and wind, and are for ever young, hard, and defiant, without sweetness, without kindness.

It is not only the work of Sheraton or Adam that the collector buys, but the work of time. He is paying for the design of Sheraton or Adam, for the skill of dead craftsmen, and for the mahogany, the walnut, and the kingwood of which the precious thing is made; and also for the work of a century, and the care of those who once owned and loved the creation he desires to possess, and never abused their trust.

These considerations help to explain, I think, why old things are so costly, and why their value tends always to increase. And these considerations also set one thinking as to the future of collecting.

Is the time not fast approaching when there will be no genuine eighteenth century furniture left in England? Already the houses of American millionaires and the museums of the United States are filled with some of our finest national possessions, and there is still a stream of these precious possessions across the Atlantic Ocean. Is it not manifest that soon the store must be exhausted? We are crushed by taxation. The owners of our great houses are not only selling their pictures, their prints, their pottery, and their furniture, but even their estates. Who is rich enough in England to buy the contents of these great houses? Who in overtaxed England can pay the prices which rich Americans are only too willing to pay for the craftsmanship of the seventeenth and eighteenth century? I foresee a time when the rich man in England will have to cross the Atlantic if he wants to buy any old English furniture in oak, walnut, or mahogany.

But I do not believe that the supply of old things is exhausted here in England. Indeed I know many great houses which are still crowded with the noblest work of our greatest craftsmen.

And I suppose that the pressure of taxation will gradually force heir after heir to part with some of his lovely possessions in order to keep head above water. So we are likely, we dealers and collectors, to go on playing our game for some years to come, until for us at least the whole game of life is played out, and other forms of beauty are revealed to us in other worlds. But let us be careful, especially the younger among us, for with every year we live, the genuine things will become rarer, and the imitation cleverer.

One day there came into my establishment a lady who was almost overwhelming in her admiration for my possessions. She was of an impulsive nature, apparently the victim of a too artistic temperament, and the gushing character of her manner was so distressing, that I wished her gone before she had been two minutes in the place. She might love old things, but they had taught her nothing. She might feel the magic of beauty, but it had not entered into her spirit. She irritated me just as a bad piece of furniture, or a bad picture irritates me. She was not "right."

Suddenly she wheeled round upon me, and looking up into my eyes as if I were the disdainful hero of a play, and she the imploring heroine, poured out such a tribute to my knowledge, my taste, my moral character, and everything else, that I

could almost have run from her. "I have come to you," she said at last, her eyes shining with uncontrollable adoration, and her lips working with the most intense and poignant appeal, "because you alone will appreciate and love my wonderful William and Mary walnut writing-table." She went on to say, bowing her head, and lowering her voice, which shook a little, how she was obliged to part with this most precious possession, and before she offered it to anyone else she wanted me to see it, because——; and once again she blew my trumpet till my soul was deafened.

Next day I went to the address she had given me. It was a boarding-house. When I gave my name, the maid showed, by her manner, that she perfectly understood what was afoot, and conducted me at once into the smoking-room. There stood the William and Mary walnut writing-table, and on the carpet beside one of its legs lay the buff-coloured envelope of a telegram.

The door opened with a rush, and in bounced the gushing lady, exclaiming in a tone of voice at once challenging and appealing, "Oh, Mr. Rohan, don't you *love* my beautiful table?"

I said to her, "How much are you asking for it?"

She replied, "I know I ought to get a hundred and fifty pounds for it, but as I am so terribly,

so desperately hard up, I am willing to let it go for eighty guineas. You, of course, could easily sell it for two hundred pounds." Here she stooped and picked up the envelope on the floor. "Only a few minutes ago," she said, flourishing the envelope, "I had a telegram from a gentleman in London, asking me to keep the table for him till Saturday, and promising me to pay a good price for it."

I looked her in the eyes, and said: "I have no buyers of walnut just now."

She stared at me, striving to read what was in my mind, and then breaking down, declared to me that her husband was a racing man, that she must have fifty pounds this very day, and begged me to take the table.

As kindly as I could, but quite firmly, I told her that I could not buy her table, and worked my way to the door. It was good to breathe the fresh air of the open world.

Now, that table was one of many similar tables turned out by a firm on the east coast of England for thirty pounds, and sold by "antique" dealers all over the country at fifty pounds and upwards. Did the gushing lady know the truth about her table? I thought she did. To satisfy myself I made enquiries. I discovered that she had invited several dealers to see her wonderful table, and that in every case they had found a telegraph envelope on the carpet, and

had been told the same story of a rich gentleman in London eager to buy. For a long time she had been making an income by disposing of fakes in this manner. No doubt an occasional visitor to the boarding-house went home rejoicing in the purchase of a bargain—a wonderful find !

How different in manner and spirit was an old lady I once called upon in a small house in the county of Dorset. When we had concluded our business, I noticed a very plain piece of earthenware on a shelf all to itself in a china cabinet. It was a cup decorated crudely with flowers. I enquired of the lady why she gave such particular honour to this cup. “ Ah,” she exclaimed proudly, “ that is not for sale. I shall never part with it. After my death it will fetch—oh, it will fetch anything.” Then, in a tone of awe, she added, “ That cup belonged to Queen Elizabeth.” Proudly she unlocked the cabinet, and reverently she took out the cup, and showed me the raised lozenge mark on its base, with a crown and the letters E. R.

Sweet old lady, dear old soul ! I could not find it in my heart to tell her that this wonderful evidence of hers was the registered mark used in the middle of the nineteenth century, and that her cup was probably made by a Stafford potter named Ridgway. I left her happy in her ignorance, and no doubt she died happily,

in the faith that her heir had the wealth of the Indies in that little cup.

There was a man who made a fortune in the War, and set up as a country squire. One of the rooms in his house is filled with a suite of walnut furniture. He takes visitors into this room, and with his hands in his pockets, a cigar at the corner of his lips, exclaims proudly : " All this 'ere gear belonged to Queen Hanne." His visitors are duly impressed. Not one of them enquires how he knows that his possessions were once the property of Queen Anne. If anyone should ask him that question, he would reply, for he is truthful in such matters, that he had seen the suite in the window of a good London shop and that it was labelled " Queen Anne." He, too, will die in the comfortable delusion that he has owned royal possessions.

This reminds me of a lady who called upon a famous London dealer and asked to see some Chippendale chairs. She was shown a set which had never been french polished, and which, therefore, retained their original patina, mellowed by age. More beautiful chairs might be seen, but never any furniture of that period in a more perfect condition ; they were wonderfully beautiful in tone. But the lady took umbrage at the sight of them, and turning to the dealer as if he had been trying to impose upon her, she said haughtily : " That is not Chippendale ; true

Chippendale is red. Please show me the genuine colour, if you have it." Against such amazing ignorance as this, what can one do but rebound helplessly? The lady, who seemed an educated person, evidently thought that "Chippendale" was the name for a colour.

Ignorance is sometimes of a more vigorous and contemptuous character. One of my friends is a well known dealer in Scotland, a man of nice judgment and the strictest probity. He was lucky enough to buy a Cromwellian settle some five feet in length with a very finely carved and panelled back. He placed it in his window, confident that it would not be long before a collector of taste came in to discuss the price. That very evening—it was during the War—a man in rough clothes entered the shop, and asked the price of "the garden seat in the window." My friend smiled, and informed the customer that this "garden seat" was a very valuable settle, that it had been made in the time of Cromwell, and that it had come out of one of the most historic castles in Scotland. The man said he didn't care when the thing had been made, whether in Cromwell's time or any other man's time, nor did he care whether it was called a settle or some other name; to him it was a garden seat, and as he wanted a garden seat, he had come in to buy it; how much? The dealer said that the price was seventy-five pounds.

“ Well,” said the customer, a little taken aback, “ it’s a deal of money to pay for a garden seat, but it has taken my fancy, and I’ll have it.” Then and there he produced notes to the tune of seventy-five pounds. Probably he was a maker of munitions, and wanted something for his back garden which would make his neighbours envious.

Ignorance in this matter is by no means confined to the uneducated classes. Some time ago I was asked by a lady of title to pay her a visit in her country house, bringing with me my very best specimens of glass. The letter was amicably written, and I was foolish enough to pay her the courtesy of accepting her invitation. One of my men packed up a selection of beautiful old glass, and away I went with my precious package to the house of this noble lady. There was no carriage to meet me at the station, and so I hired a cab. Imagine my surprise when, on arriving at the house, I found myself received with an extreme coldness, as though I had been some sort of bagman, and the lady began at once to depreciate the glass, as though she were bargaining at a stall in Petticoat Lane. I had expected kindness, gentleness, hospitality, certainly intelligence. Imagine the shock to my rather sensitive feelings. I told her firmly but politely that as she did not admire these extremely rare and most beautiful things, I could not think of

selling them to her at any price at all. She was a little taken aback, and began to admit, but with a superior air, which I thought extremely impertinent, that they were pretty enough; but I cut her short. I told her that she evidently knew nothing at all about the subject, and that therefore her opinion could be of no conceivable interest to one who had made it a life's study.

Such was the state of affairs between us when the door opened and her son strolled into the room. He wore an eyeglass. He approached me with his hands in his pockets. I cannot exaggerate the studied offensiveness of this young man's manner. "Ah," he said, in a languid drawl, "you're the expert in glass, are you?" I looked at him, and made no reply. Then he actually said these words, "Tell me all about glass."

The delicious humour of this remark did not then break upon my mind, which was in a thoroughly nettled condition, and I merely requested the young man to give orders that my glass should be properly packed and returned to me as soon as possible. Then I walked from the room. But as I drove through the beautiful countryside, feeling the grandeur of nature and the quiet peace of long ages of civilisation, I recalled this and that friend of mine, the gentlemen and good judges, who would rejoice to hear

this tale, and who would laugh over it for many a happy day. Does not the young man with a monocle deserve to stroll into the history of collecting and to live there for ever with his drawling question, “ *Tell me all about glass ?* ”

How different is this little incident from the tablets of my memory. One morning, looking up from some papers, I saw a handsome young man and a very pretty girl staring at a cabinet in my window. Something childlike in their appearance, as though they were too shy to enter the shop, caught my attention and awoke my interest. They were staring at the cabinet, and talking at the same time. They were sometimes smiling, sometimes blushing. At one minute they moved towards the door, at the next, they were edging away. Finally, with one last look at the cabinet, they strolled slowly and reluctantly out of sight.

That same afternoon, as I came down the stairs from superintending the restoration of a wonderful old medicine table from Lulworth Castle, I saw the same delightful couple staring once more at the cabinet. In the midst of their discussion they glanced up and saw me standing in the centre of the shop. I hope it was something paternal in my appearance which overcame their diffidence and enabled them to find courage enough to lift the latch of my door. I did my best to make them feel perfectly at their ease.

“Would you mind telling me,” said the young man, “if it’s no bother (we’re only looking round, you know) what is the price of this cabinet?” I told him. The price, I am afraid, was almost like a blow in his face. He glanced at the girl; she too was shocked. He stammered out an apology for having troubled me, threw a helpless look at some of the other things, and then, placing his hand through the girl’s arm, made for the door.

But early next morning they came bravely and boldly into the shop, and asked if they might examine the cabinet more carefully. During this examination, which satisfied them extremely, the pleasant young man said to me, “We have decided to buy it. I’ve brought my cheque with me. Would you mind sending it to us in Surrey as soon as possible?”

This was some time ago. The other day they came into my shop. “Do you happen to remember,” he asked me, “that we once bought a very jolly cabinet from you?” I told him I remembered the transaction perfectly. He laughed and said, “I think you ought to know more about it. We were on our honeymoon. We saw that cabinet and loved it tremendously. But we couldn’t afford it. However, that night we went back to the hotel and talked things over. We came to the conclusion that it would be far jollier to sacrifice our honeymoon, which had

only just begun, than to lose that beautiful cabinet. Then we came back next day, bought it, and set off that same afternoon for home." I asked him if they had ever regretted their sacrifice. The lady broke in, very charmingly, saying, " Oh, no, Mr. Rohan, that dear cabinet is a constant joy to us, and we love to think how we managed to possess it."

Let me say that I often think far more happiness is to be found in the heart of the small collector than in the heart of the rich man whose house is splendid and overwhelming with antiquities. It is perhaps possible in this matter to have too much of a good thing. In a great house, where every room is filled with wonderful things, there is a museum feeling; whereas in a small house, where rare and exquisite things are only occasional, but in an atmosphere of general rightness, the domestic quality of craftsmanship makes itself felt and the heart is glad. In the big house we gape, we wonder, we exclaim, we become tired; in the little house, we handle, fondle, and love.

I like to think that as taste improves and knowledge widens, there will be no ugly things in any of the houses of the English people, however humble they may be, and that all the dreadful stained oak furniture with plush seats which

is now so popular in certain middle-class circles, may be burned out of existence. I should like to think that in fifty years' time all the furniture of this country will be made in the designs of the great craftsmen, and that in every home there will be something from that wonderful period—a piece of pottery, a print, a drinking-glass, a snuff-box, a pastille cottage, a work-basket, a bit of lustre, a tea-caddy, a kitchen chair, or a candle-stick—as a reminder of the debt we owe to the past, and as a testimony of our love for the old and the beautiful.

Surely there is a moral, even a political, value in this reverence for the perfect achievements of the human spirit. It steadies us, as well as purifies us. We are not likely to be iconoclasts if we love beauty, however much we may disdain the use of “idols.” We shall not destroy loveliness in order to get our way. Nor shall we ever be so foolish as to think that the human heart can be made happy by regimentation. We shall be patient, wise, and kindly, looking on the heart of man and considering that his true life is in his thoughts. A love of the beautiful and a reverence for antiquity, completes the human spirit. They enable it to reach a height of happiness, and to possess a depth of peace, which are as unknown to the intellectual, lacking that love and that reverence, as they are to the coarse, the sensual, and the dark. Beauty is the supreme

aspect of the divine, more wonderful even than goodness, grander even than truth. It was because the puritan overlooked beauty that his truth and goodness failed to satisfy the human heart.

CHAPTER X

MAJOR BOBBIE

WHAT I have just written sets me thinking as to the future—not my own personal future, for I am past the stage of either ambition or fear, but the future of my boy, my second son, “Major Bobbie,” as some dear friends of mine call him, who will carry on when I am gone. The future of the dealer, what does it hold out as a career? That is a question worth thinking over.

Is the younger generation conscious of reverence for the past and love for beautiful craftsmanship? I am not sure. The youth of our time seems to me more given to the delights of physical exercise, and the joys of the open air than to those quiet pleasures of the spirit which excite the collector. I greatly respect the younger generation. I love the gaiety of its mind and the freshness of its heart. I feel sure it is physically and morally a very healthy generation. But I wonder if its spirit is aware of those things which belong to its peace. It seems to me, if I may say so, to pass by either without seeing them or with only a glance over the shoulder, things which deserve a long and loving contemplation.

Will the fathers and mothers of the next generation be as willing to sacrifice their pleasures for the well-being of their children as those did who are now grandparents? Will they ever find a pleasure in tranquillity? Will they ever be able to rest themselves in the eternal verities when disappointment, sorrow, great pain, and the shadow of death fall across their paths? I do not know. I am not quite sure. In any case such considerations lie outside the scope of this little book. What is legitimate for me to consider is the attitude of this gay and fresh-air generation towards beauty as it is expressed in craftsmanship.

My feeling is that young people, to speak generally, have good taste, very good taste, but that they set no value on antiquity. Lady Sackville once told a friend of mine that Lord Kitchener had knowledge but no taste. The younger generation seem to me to have taste, but no knowledge. They have an instinctive sense of what is right in form and design, but no knowledge of this great subject, no knowledge of why one thing is more beautiful than another, and how this craftsman's work is to be distinguished from that. Perhaps they are too impatient of study to care for this knowledge, and are content to live impulsively, so long as they do not commit too obvious *faux pas* in the matter of taste. They do not like to undertake anything

which involves mental effort. Two qualities, if I may say so, they seem to lack, in spite of all their goodness and gaiety ; one is patience, and the other reverence.

I think English homes will be very well furnished during the next fifty years, but that the happy band of collectors will tend to become fewer. There will be far less general vulgarity in the domestic scenery of English life, but there will also be fewer houses in which the host or hostess has something to show a grateful and discriminating guest that kindles the historic sense and imparts a feeling of reverence. People will take pretty things and good taste for granted. There will be a gradual diminishing of the faculty of reverence. In other words, the collector is likely to find himself, more and more, a rather lonely person.

But I have written this book in the hope of increasing the number of collectors, because I feel that collecting is one of the most pleasing and lasting of human pleasures, and because I am sure mankind will be poorer when there is less reverence than now exists for the achievements of antiquity. Therefore I dare to hope that I am wrong in my fears, and that as education improves, and the old standards of taste are raised, and seen to be of permanent value, a new generation of collectors may arise who will seek out the beautiful and cherish it as a sacred possession.

My son's enthusiasm for old things encourages me to cherish this hope. If ever a man had reason to regard loveliness as a mockery and antiquity as a mere craze, it is Major Bobbie, as presently my tale will prove.

When he was a mere boy, more engaged in sports and games than anything else, and inclined, perhaps, to regard ginger-beer and a strawberry ice as the food of the gods, he occasionally helped me, when I was called away, and my assistants were engaged on work that could not be neglected, by "minding the shop." On one of these occasions I returned from a visit to find him, with an old drinking-glass in his hand, solemnly lecturing two gentlemen on the subject of glass and its periods. Much amused, and not a little delighted, I passed through the shop and entered my little sanctum at the back of the establishment, lighting a cigarette, and sitting back in my chair with a smile on my face, at the thought of Bobbie as an instructor. My heart warmed with the hope that one day he would be my partner and love his work.

Presently the door opened, and Bobbie appeared with the two customers trailing behind him. "These gentlemen," he said, "would like to speak to you."

I rose to greet them.

One of them, studying me narrowly, said that

he was very glad to make my acquaintance, and, indicating his companion, added: "You may have heard of us. Our name is Duveen. We are, in fact, Duveen Brothers." My heart jumped at the thought of Bobbie's lecture!

"We have been greatly interested——" said the elder Duveen . . .

"Greatly interested," repeated his brother with emphasis.

" . . . by your son's conversation on drinking-glasses. That is a subject of which we know nothing, and he has not only enlightened our darkness, but given us quite an enthusiasm for this branch of collecting. As a little expression of our gratitude we should like to give you an introduction to a client of ours who lives in this part of England, and who is a collector of glass—Lady Cooper, of Hursley."

I made a suitable *apologia* to these great men for my boy's presumption, and added that Lady Cooper had already discovered me and was one of the kindest of my patrons. They would not allow me to offer excuses for Bobbie, insisting that he had interested them greatly, and was a veritable master of his subject, adding that when they returned from America they would like him to pay them a visit in London. "That boy," said the elder Duveen, "if he takes to furniture and pictures as he has taken to glass, will make his mark in the world." This remark

was all I needed to complete my happiness. It was more to me than many rich customers.

How little did any of us foresee the future of Bobbie in those peaceful days. At the outbreak of War he offered himself, with a boy's passion, to the army, went through the terrible first Battle of the Somme as an officer in a pioneer regiment, and then fought at the Ancre. It was in the fighting at the Ancre that he was called upon, this lover of beautiful things, with his *flair* for lovely old glass, to endure a terrible experience. A shell burst close to a place where he was standing. He was blown off his feet, came down to the ravaged and blood-stained earth, and was then buried under the falling *débris*. It was long before he was rescued, and, when rescued, he was, of course, shattered in mind and body. All the splendid gallantry, the noble courage, the rejoicing patriotism, the quick moving and decisive action of his brain, seemed to have gone in that one dreadful moment. We thought we should never see our boy again, but should see, instead, a ghost of the boy we had loved so dearly from the day of his birth.

But he fought his way back not only to health of body and vigour of mind, but actually to the army. Nothing could keep him back, not even his mother's prayers and his father's entreaties. Denied a place in the fighting line he claimed his right to help his country in her need, and scorning

to take advantage of the shelter of a convalescent home, he went back to khaki and a life of action. All this, I must be careful to say, was done without any heroics, and without any pretensions ; the boy went back to the army because teamwork was in his blood, because it was the thing to do, and also because he liked the life of a soldier.

One day, soon after his demobilisation, a lady of singular grace and charm came into my shop, saying that she was looking about for small pieces of antique furniture which could be copied by disabled soldiers in an establishment she was interested in in London. Those who know this lady, Mrs. Bulteel, will realise that I do not exaggerate when I speak of her grace and charm. I felt instantly drawn to her, put myself at her disposal, and, as an old man will, opened my heart and spoke of my son. She asked me what regiment he was in, and I told her that he was in the King's Royal Rifles. This seemed to interest her, and she said that she would like one day to meet him.

Some time after this a tall, very distinguished looking, and a most gracious old gentleman came into my shop. He said to me, " I have called to see a brother officer of mine who is here." I told him I thought he must be mistaken. " Have you not a son," he said, " who was in the old 60th, the King's Royal Rifles ? " Then it flashed into my

mind who my visitor was, and I called upstairs to Bobbie to come down at once. The caller was Field-Marshal Lord Grenfell. When Bobbie appeared, the veteran Field-Marshal, uncle of the glorious Grenfell twins, advanced to meet him with extended hand. "My niece, Mrs. Bulteel, has told me about you. I am very glad to make the acquaintance of so gallant a brother officer." The boy coloured as he took the veteran's hand, and replied, "We have met before, sir." "Where was that?" asked the Field-Marshal, cocking his head on one side, as he leaned heavily on his stick.

"You inspected my battalion, sir, at Wellingborough, just before we went to France." The pride of the young man as he mentioned this memory of his military experiences seemed to touch the heart of the old Field-Marshal.

How charming to me, the sight of those two soldiers talking together of war in the little place I had filled with the victories of art and beauty! Both were collectors. Both loved, with taste and discrimination, the things of antiquity. In the old man was all the grace and courtesy of a by-gone age; in the younger, all the quickness and alacrity of a generation whose youth had been spent in a veritable inferno of anguish.

Some days after this I went to visit Lord Grenfell, as he had offered most kindly to show me his Napoleonic collection, relics and books.

How happily passed that afternoon in the society of this great soldier and noble gentleman, whose many and high services to his country have never been trumpeted by a publicity campaign, and whose friends regard him with a love which only just stops short of idolatry. Such men are the very salt of England's public life.

I would like to say that I think Lord Grenfell's cultivated love for old and beautiful things, has helped to give to this famous veteran that poise of spirit and grace of manner which are so conspicuous in his courtesy, and so powerful in their influence on his outlook. I have never met a true collector, by which I mean a man really in love with beauty, who has not possessed, in some degree at least, this gentleness of manner, and this kindness of spirit.

One more incident of Major Bobbie, and I have done. In the year 1921, the managing clerk of a firm of auctioneers told me that there were one or two glasses worth looking at in a sale his firm was to conduct in a house not far from Bournemouth. I was not greatly impressed by this information, for the house was a little villa, and faked glass might easily deceive an auctioneer's managing clerk. All the same, I told Bobbie he might as well go out to this place and see what the glass was like; and away he went, glad to be in the open air, with the sun shining on the world.

A little time elapsed, and he burst into the shop exclaiming that he had got a taxicab waiting for me at the end of the Arcade, and that I must come at once. Off I went with the boy, and found that his instinct had not failed him. In that humble villa, surrounded by meretricious rubbish, alone in its glory, was a Jacobite glass of supreme value. I give a photograph of it in this book. It was $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches high, and had belonged to one of the inner Jacobite circles, a glass of which very few had been made, and of which only one or two exist to this day. I was just as much excited as my son by the sight of this glass, and made some efforts to buy it then and there. But the owner was away, and the auctioneer was obliged to offer it by public auction. I suppose my enquiries had got about, for the glass was run up to £60, at which figure Bobbie bought it. That price must have astonished most of the people who came to pick up a bargain at that little commonplace villa; but they would have been far more greatly astonished if they had known the hundreds of pounds for which it was eventually sold.

Let the reader learn from this incident that a bargain may often be found in quite unexpected places, and that by training his mind and eye he may be able to pick out a veritable jewel even on the rubbish heaps of suburbia. To Major Bobbie, at any rate, a part of the fun of life is this

adventurous character of a collector's existence, and he forgets the horror of that explosion on the Ancre in keeping his eyes open for rare things wherever he may be. He is something of a hunter, something of an explorer, and when he comes to finish with this wonderful and adventurous world which he loves so heartily, and where beauty hides and truth has to be searched for, it might well be written on his grave :

Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.

CHAPTER XI

THE FURNITURE PHYSICIAN

WHEN the average person reads in his newspaper that a cabinet, a table, or a piece of glass has fetched some prodigious price at Christie's, he is too readily disposed to condemn the purchaser as a monomaniac who has lost all sense of proportion.

There is, however, an aspect of this question which does not, perhaps, present itself with clearness to the understanding of the average person. I do not for a moment dismiss the average person as a Philistine; indeed I am myself inclined to deplore the high prices paid for rarities, since this money influence may have a deleterious effect on the gentle art of collecting—encouraging commercialism, stimulating the energies of the faker, and depressing or disheartening the true amateur of lovely things. But I do feel convinced that the average person misses the whole point in this matter when he so unreservedly lays down the law on the subject of high prices.

Does it, I wonder, ever occur to him that it is something of an achievement for a piece of furniture to last as long as two or three hundred years? Does it ever occur to him to distinguish between "a museum piece" and any old bit of furniture he sees in a shop window? Does he go into the why or wherefore of these high prices before he passes judgment on the rich collector who pays enormous sums for his acquisitions at Christie's?

When he reads in his newspaper that an article of furniture has been sold for a great sum of money he should first of all assure himself that he is reading of "a museum piece." This is to say, the bit of furniture is in precisely the same state and condition, save for the mellowing influence of time, as that in which it left its maker's hands to take up a place in the domestic life of some English family two hundred years ago. It has never been french polished. It has never been touched up by an artist of a later taste. It has never been knocked about by careless hands. It is a thing of beauty, and therefore a joy for ever.

Because it is so exceedingly rare to find any of the furnishings of previous centuries in this hallowed and unmarred condition, the perfect specimen commands, rightfully commands, and always will command, an extremely high price. Nor, if we put out at compound interest for two

hundred years the money originally paid for it, is the price it now commands so excessively absurd as the hurried thinker might suppose. That money has been locked up. It has produced no revenue. Wages, on the contrary, have been expended to preserve the beautiful thing in its true condition. Two hundred years is a long time.

Turn now from these museum pieces, which can become the property only of millionaires or great national collections, and consider the average price of old furniture which has descended to the present time in a condition which no millionaire would look at for a moment. Something has been broken off here ; something has been added there ; and the french polisher has been at his fell work upon it ever since his dreadful polish was invented. The wood is old. The piece is genuine. No dealer with any knowledge would turn away from it with contempt. But it is not the piece of furniture created by its maker in the 17th or 18th century.

Obviously such a piece will not command a high price. It will not command a high price because the rich collector wants nothing in his collection but museum pieces. If perfect it might be worth six or seven hundred pounds. As it is, forty pounds is perhaps the best price it will fetch.

A dear friend of mine asked me the other day

to come to look at a Queen Anne chest of drawers which had been offered to him for £30. I was surprised to find that this little chest was a genuine one. But the stand, with its three beautiful drawers, was without its rounded feet, the top was warped in a horrible manner, and the original patina had been long destroyed—it was difficult to see the inlay. I told him that £30 was a reasonable price, a tempting price, and that I would get the little chest put into good condition for him for a ten-pound note. He bought it, and I took charge of it. First of all I got out a trial set of feet in deal. Three times did I get the cabinet-maker to alter the deal feet, and twice did I have a new deal moulding to go between the feet and the bottom of the stand. Then, when I felt myself perfectly satisfied that everything was appropriate and right, I had the moulding and feet made in old walnut of the period.

While this was proceeding, the chest itself was emerging from the dirt and polish of long ages. The warps on the dishevelled top were brought level, the original patina came glowing out from behind its prison of polish, and beeswax was applied. In a few weeks that little chest was worth £80, and at that sum its rejoicing owner has insured it. He said to me, "I intended to put it in my dressing-room, but it so lovely that I have given it to my wife for her drawing-room."

To-day it stands opposite a perfect tambour-topped writing-table of kingwood and tulipwood, made by Sheraton, and worth £120 ; it does not disgrace it. As my friend said to me, "The two old things now seem to exchange the most agreeable confidences across the room."

Some forty years ago, when the value of old furniture began to rise, excited housewives would go to the attics and lumber-rooms of their houses and discover all manner of broken-down antiques lying there in sad disarray. Undaunted by the condition of these relics, they would have them brought downstairs, loaded up on a cart, and dispatched to the local cabinet-maker for restoration. They knew nothing about it themselves, and scepticism concerning the cabinet-maker never entered their impetuous minds. Moreover, when the cabinet-maker delivered the first of their articles, radiant with brand-new inlay, and shining like glass in its coating of French polish, the delighted housewife went off to all her friends, extolling this wonderful cabinet-maker and recommending them to send to him all their own furniture of a bygone age.

Terrible was the havoc of the provincial cabinet-maker thirty years ago. He destroyed thousands of pounds worth of furniture. He took things which now would be priceless and reduced

them to a condition of rubbish. All day long he was busy turning Queen Anne into Tottenham Court Road. The severity of the old craftsmen irritated his rococo mind; their dignity made no appeal whatever to his ignorant taste. He looked upon himself not merely as a restorer, but as an improver. Sad to tell, there was no one among the educated classes to say him nay. Indeed, it was the upper-classes who filled his workrooms with the glorious creations of Chippendale, Sheraton, and Hepplewhite, and encouraged him to ruin the furniture and rob their heirs.

The usual procedure, taking for example an old Sheraton sideboard that had been knocked about and stained, was as follows: the cabinet-maker scraped off all the old patina, well glass-papered it, and then covered the whole with plaster of Paris to fill up the grain; after this he finished off with his execrable French polish. Some cabinet-makers were not always satisfied with sacrilege of this nature; they must needs paint the lily and gild refined gold by putting *new* inlays and shells and flowers into the old piece, till our sideboard was lost to the collector, and its history gone. The same thing happened with mahogany-cased long or grandfather clocks. I have seen vases and arabesque inlays put into the doors of these cases, most ornate and florid, decorations that would have made Sheraton

blush with shame if he had heard them called his work.

About twenty-five years ago there started a rage to purchase Chippendale claw and ball feet chairs, and as they were scarce, cabinet-makers began to take out the straight legs of old furniture and substitute new cabriole legs with claw and ball feet. I remember some years ago a Yorkshire gentleman asked me to examine his set of eight Chippendale claw and ball arm-chairs, a harlequin set, i.e. all different types. The whole of these eight chairs had been fitted with new front legs. Imagine a chair of the "Chinese" taste with cabriole legs and claw and ball feet; others with carved backs in the "Gothic" taste, all the same cabriole legs with claw and ball feet. How incongruous! The pity of it was, the chairs in this case, so far as the back and arms were concerned, were perfectly genuine. How deplorable that they should be spoilt in this way!

To-day the collector knows how an antique piece of furniture ought to be restored; but ignorance still prevails among the general public, even the educated public. Let me, then, state briefly that the whole secret of restoration is getting back to the original condition of the furniture. You must not dream of covering up scratches and dents with such an abomination as French polish. Your object is to see the pattern



Chippendale Arm-chair—Yorkshire

of the wood ; anything glassy is to be avoided. Get back to the original wood, and reveal the original patina, a colour that can be obtained only by age, leaving the scratches and small dents shown on the surface by usage.

The amateur must use his common-sense. A piece of furniture made, say, in 1760 or thereabouts, cannot be found in absolute mint state, though one sees pieces described as antique as smooth as a baby's face. Some years ago I saw a wonderful cabinet at a dealer's ; at first glance it looked the real thing, but when I saw its more than beautiful condition, I questioned it. The dealer explained to me that the family had prized it so much that they would never allow it to be touched. Imagine such a story ! He was going to vouch for a piece of furniture having been kept in lavender, as it were, for a hundred and fifty years. A ridiculous story. After examining this impressive cabinet I saw it was a complete fake ; but no doubt some unfortunate amateur collector acquired it, and now tells the story to his credulous friends of the family which kept this marvellous bit of furniture in lavender for a hundred and fifty years !

If the reader has any antique furniture that wants restoring, let him not send it to any ordinary cabinet-maker, otherwise he will be almost sure to get it spoilt. The great idea of the average restorer is to cover up all defects

with stains and French polish, and to return the piece so polished that it will not be necessary to have a mirror in the room—a glassy, horrible abomination.

In most old country towns and in London, one can find a man who has restored old furniture for years, and knows how it should be done. He treats it as a relic of the past, carefully cleans it with solvents, repairs the parts missing with old mahogany or walnut, as the case may be, that is to say, with pieces of wood contemporary with the period of the piece that he is restoring, and works and works and works with the supreme object of getting back the original patina. I spent quite £200 a year in buying very broken antique furniture solely for restoring other pieces ; that was when I had fourteen cabinet-makers and apprentices at work. It is an art, a real art, to fit a piece of even old wood into an article of furniture so that it does not jar the eye ; and it is also an art, a real art, to bring back a fine old piece of damaged and ill-used furniture to its pristine condition.

In the Victorian period it became the vogue to have mahogany turned handles placed on the drawers of sideboards and chest-of-drawers. The beautiful old brass handles were taken off and these wooden handles were put on 18th century furniture to match the 19th century turned-knob period. There are one or two firms to-day which

turn out exceedingly good reproductions of the 18th century brass furniture, as fortunately some of the old handles have been found, and they can be copied, not only to pattern, but as to colour and finish. Such work is not vandalism. It is artistic work. Every encouragement should be given to such firms to go on copying the best.

My last word on this subject is: be sure you get your old furniture *sympathetically* restored. Do not content yourself with the recommendation of a friend, and do not trust a restorer who makes a purely commercial impression on your mind. Seek till you find a genuine craftsman, one who makes upon your mind the impression of a true artist, one whose look and speech tell you that he loves his work. Never mind in what back street he may live, or how humble may be his establishment; grapple such a man to your side with hooks of steel, and treat him generously, because he does not seek riches, and with respect, because he is an artist.

May I add this final suggestion? I think it would be a good thing if all possessors of beautiful things regarded themselves, not so much as owners of those things, which they themselves did nothing to create, but rather as trustees for the posterity which will inherit them. Wherein, perhaps, is a parable, for it is written: *We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*

Happy will this world become when everyone seeks to leave behind him for those who come after, not only lovable and beautiful things, but a memory of unselfish devotion to the true, the good, and the beautiful.

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